

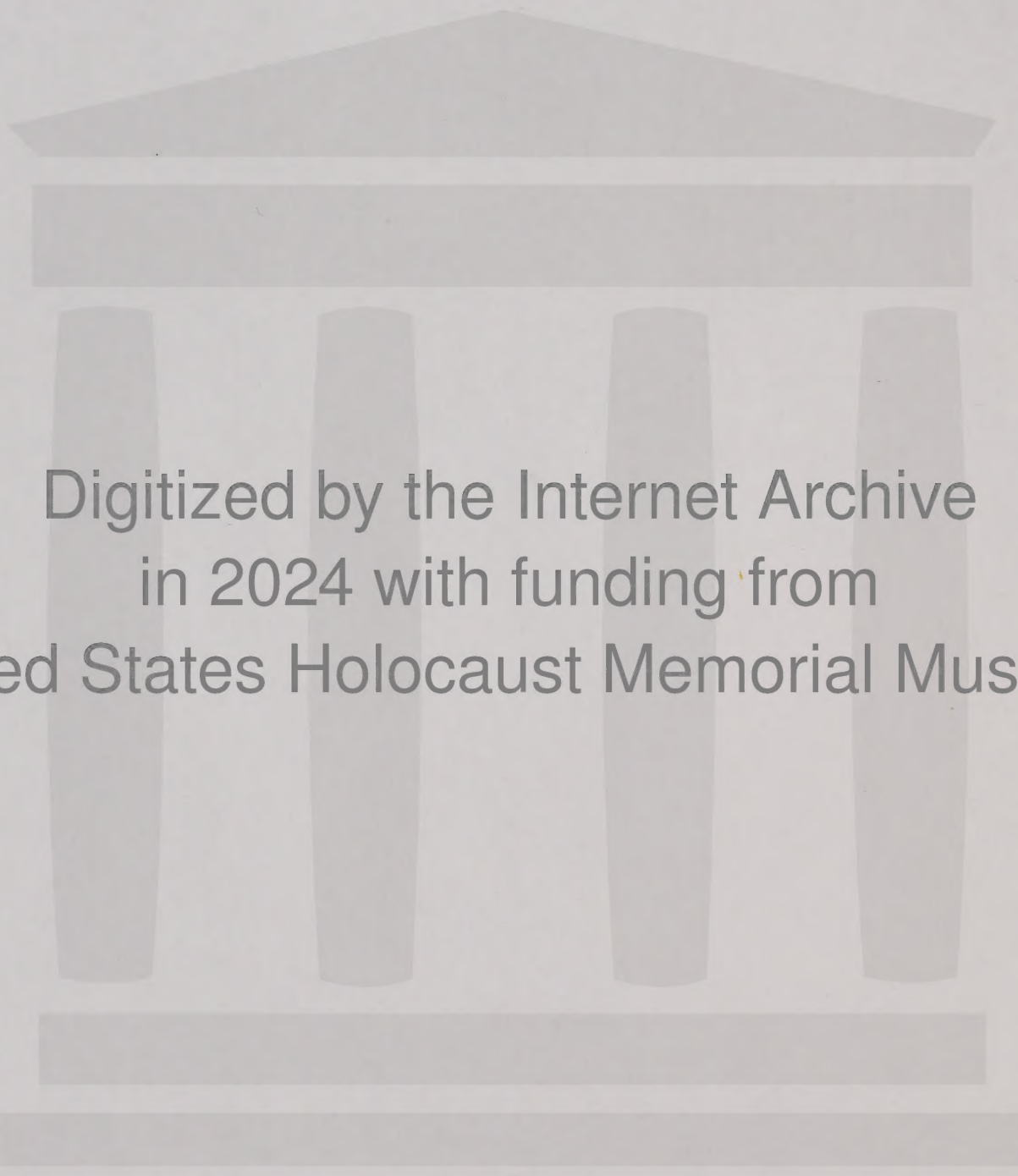


ועידת התביעות  
Claims Conference  
Conference on Jewish Material Claims  
Against Germany

## **Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection**

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## FRIENDLY ENEMY ALIENS

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Chapter 1

The day that I was considered grown-up even by adults was the Tenth of November 1938 -- not because I had watched sacred scrolls of the Law being thrown out of the window of the synagogue at the back of our house in Hamburg, Germany, nor even because my beloved father had been taken away to a Concentration Camp. No, the reason was that until that day, although I was already thirteen and three quarters, I had been kept in absolute ignorance of the world of adults. Thus, I knew nothing of the family finances. It was not considered "nice" to discuss money matters in front of the children. But today Mama had taken me into her confidence. She told me that the rent was paid until the first of December and she showed me where she had hidden several hundred Mark bills among the crockery in the sideboard. "It's better someone else knows just in case I'm not around when the money is needed." In other words, in case she too was taken away to a concentration camp. I pushed this horrible thought to the back of my mind and instead felt thrilled to be the "someone" in the know.

There was another subject, apart from money, which was not mentioned, at least not in our hearing. Though my parents had a lively sense of humour and Papa had a huge repertoire of jokes, no story or joke that was even slightly risqué ever passed my parents' lips to fall on our innocent ears. People fell in love, got engaged, married and had children -- but the way they talked, sex never came into any of this. It made me happy and gave me a feeling of security to see my parents walk arm in arm, or when at the end of a meal Mama leaned against Papa, while he laid his arm across her shoulders during the lengthy Grace After Meals. I sometimes wondered whether this was quite the right thing to do during a prayer,



not because of any suspicion of indecency, but it just did not seem quite proper and in good taste when addressing the Almighty.

We were taught not to waste money on shoddy goods, not to buy rubbishy sweets. We walked to school instead of taking a tram even in rain and snow. Instead of sending them by post, Papa occasionally sent us children to deliver his business letters. To make these quite long walks more adventurous I had invented a game: On the way home I blindfolded Gitta and Raphael, my younger sister and brother, and pretended that I was leading them to the docks at the other end of town where we would board a boat bound for Palestine. The pretence was kept up all the way; the stairs to our apartment were the gangway that led up on deck. Years later Gitta told me that though she knew we were bound for home, she was nevertheless disappointed that the ship always turned out to be our own front door.

\* \* \* \* \*

This Tenth of November had started out no different from any other day. When I woke up a subdued light shimmered through the curtains. I let myself luxuriate in semi-drowsiness. One could just tell the outline of the furniture. The tall, dark wardrobe which reached almost to the ceiling had given me nightmares as a little girl. Deep down I must have known that it was merely a suit hanging on the outside of it, that it was not really a menacing, black-hooded giant about to pounce on me. But it frightened me out of my wits just the same, and I dared not confess my terror for fear of being laughed at, especially by my brothers. Some years later I dared myself to climb to the top of it by way of the headboard of Gitta's bed and jump down onto it. Once, Papa caught me in the act. He stifled a gasp: "Don't ever do that again -- it ruins the mattress." There was no need to extract a



promise for one just did not disobey Papa. Dimly I understood that his primary concern was for me and not for the mattress. Henceforth I placed Gitta's quilt on the floor and jumped on to that. It was a longer jump still, but it spared the mattress and got me round the prohibition at one and the same time.

On the opposite wall stood Papa's large desk where he wrote his letters every weekday after lunch. Ten-year-old Jacob and I sat on either side of him, preparing our homework under his supervision on the flaps that pulled out from the desk. Ours was a seven-room flat; however, since Oma, Mama's mother, had come to live with us -- because like all Jews she was no longer allowed to have a non-Jewish maid -- and there were also two boarders now, Gitta and I were moved into the livingroom. Also, Papa had given up the office he used to rent in an upstairs flat, so our living room had become a multi-purpose room. In the centre of the room I could just make out the huge oak dining table which, when fully extended, made it perfect for playing ping-pong. Now it was covered by its everyday deep red plush cloth which did splendid service as King Ahasuerus's royal mantle on the Jewish festival of Purim which celebrates our people's deliverance in ancient Persia from Haman, the king's wicked vizier. Purim is in the spring, but next month we would celebrate Chanukka, the joyous eight-day Festival of Lights.

On this Tenth of November these pleasant thoughts were rudely interrupted by the door opening. Surely, it wasn't time yet to get up? It was Oma who woke us up in the morning, but here was Papa striding into the room, with the telephone, which was kept in the parents' bedroom at night, tucked under his arm, and he was in braces, without a waistcoat and jacket. I don't think I had ever seen him not fully dressed before. He nodded curtly in my direction, plugged in the phone and dialled: "Is that the police? I wish to inform you that



the synagogue at the back of Rutschbahn 11 has been broken into and is being vandalized at this very moment -- you are sending your men? Thank you."

Gitta and I were out of bed in a flash and barefoot we rushed to our parents' bedroom at the back of the flat where we stood glued to the window. A weird spectacle met our eyes. Beyond the back garden stood the "Klaus." Through its windows we saw the chandelier swing like a pendulum, moved by invisible hands, swaying backward and forward in ever widening revolutions -- crash -- darkness. A window was pushed open, a chair flew out, tumbled to the ground and broke into splinters. It was followed by another chair and yet another, and then there was silence. What were they up to now? We had not long to wait: a white snake jumped down from the window-sill and slithered down, down to the ground below, it seemed unending.

"Scrolls of the Law, Torah Scrolls," we gasped, not wanting to believe our eyes. Papa ran back to our room which overlooked the street. He returned a moment later:

"Yes, they're there, several policemen on the other side of the street -- waiting for those godless vandals to complete their work of destruction."

And so it turned out to be. Non-Jewish neighbours from upstairs had gone to the police station and had personally brought the policemen back in their car.

We dressed, swallowed some breakfast and set off for school. My brothers had a short way to the Talmud Tora School, founded in 1815, in an older part of Hamburg, by Mendel Frankfurter, the grandfather of my great-great-grandfather, to enable poor Jewish boys to receive a good Jewish and secular education. Eight-year-old Gitta and I had a much longer way to our Jewish girls' school in the Carolinenstrasse.

Most of my class had turned up. We discussed the events in subdued yet excited voices. What we had witnessed that morning had not been an isolated incident, other



synagogues too had been broken into. Jewish men had been picked up in the streets and taken to prison. Jewish shops had been wrecked and looted. We were still comparing notes when a strange teacher entered our class room. Where was our own form-teacher?

"He won't be coming to school today. He was picked up by the Gestapo. And there won't be any lessons today."

We made for the door.

"Stay in your places. You'll have to be patient. We found out that the boys from the non-Jewish school next door will be let out earlier than usual today, so we are first sending the younger girls home to avoid those hooligans. You'll be told when it's your turn."

Many years later Gitta told me that she had climbed the stairs to our class-room in order to walk home with me, but not daring to open the door, had retraced her steps and gone home alone.

Several hours passed before the teacher returned.

"Right, it's your turn now. Two girls will leave the school building every couple of minutes. And don't walk home by your usual, shortest route or you'll run into the big boys from the school next door; go in round-about ways. Good luck, get home safely."

It took my friend Miriam and me two hours to get home. We walked through quite unfamiliar parts of the city. It was amazing how ordinary they looked, as though nothing untoward had happened today, but then, these were areas where hardly any Jews lived.

"Aunt Bella 'phoned just now," Mama told us. "Uncle Poldi is still at home, but she expects him to be taken away by the Gestapo any moment, like all the men. She is out of oranges for him and asked if one of you could take her some." Only later did I wonder why oranges were so important to him and why their Julchen, one year younger than I, could not go out and buy oranges. My eldest brother, Beni, offered to go.



"No, you'd best not go out. True, fifteen-year-old boys aren't supposed to be arrested, but with your stubbly chin . . . Betty, would you go?"

I took the bag of oranges and went on my way, by the shortest route this time. Even so, the oranges were too late. Uncle Poldi was already gone. I rushed back home. Mama called me from the kitchen.

"Please finish making this packet of sandwiches for Papa, just in case he . . . I must run upstairs to Clara Jacobsen, her husband went out early this morning to try and salvage Torah Scrolls, she has not seen him since. Someone saw him being arrested. And she's in her eighth month and feeling very poorly." -- Her baby was born a few days later, died after four weeks and was buried the day its father was released from the concentration camp. --

While I had been out Papa had told the children that only he would answer the door today. I had not heard this injunction. The front door bell rang. I went to open it. Two tall strangers, dressed in dark suits, asked for Papa. I led them to the dining-room. I gave Papa the packet of sandwiches and the bag of oranges that had come too late for Uncle Poldi. I had cut through the orange skin to make them easier to peel. The men advised Papa to leave his watch and any other valuables at home as they could not be held responsible for any eventual loss. The conduct and bearing of these men were so correct, even polite, that it was impossible to equate them with the hooligans who had been sent earlier that day to destroy our synagogues and to wreck Jewish shops. Yet, our two gentlemanly visitors had come with the sole intent of taking an innocent man to prison in Fuhlsbüttel. Papa asked to have Mama called down from the neighbour, but the men refused. Silently we accompanied Papa to the front door and kissed him goodbye. We weren't going to make a scene and give those Nazis the satisfaction of witnessing the pain they were causing us. A little later we heard crying and wailing from the open front door across the landing. How could the neighbours' children be



so uncontrolled and thus make the parting even harder for their father? In the midst of our own grief I felt proud of our spartan upbringing: a stiff upper lip at all times -- until the following morning -- when our neighbour returned to his family unharmed. The Gestapo men, apparently affected by the children's wild grief, had promised that their father would come home again. And so, their undignified conduct had triumphed over our self control. Who knows, maybe our proud bearing was costing Papa his life?

A few minutes after Papa had been taken away Mama returned from upstairs, dismayed beyond words to see him gone. Then, the anguished expression left her eyes, she thrust out her small, round chin, straightened her shoulders and looked around her as though admonishing herself: Rosi, this is no time to indulge your grief. Your five children, your mother and the two strange boys are now depending on you alone. She sent me shopping, for one could not know how long those shops would hold out which until now had refused to put up a notice: "Jews Undesired." But all she asked me to buy was a quarter pound of coffee from the shop around the corner. It seemed an odd choice until Mama explained that coffee was the only thing which relieved Oma's frequent migraine attacks. In front of our house a gang of rough neighbourhood kids tried to beat me up. After a struggle I managed to break loose. Despite coffee being in short supply, the saleswoman produced a quart from under the counter. She looked at my dishevelled appearance.

"Betty, why have you been crying?"

"Because the Gestapo have just taken Papa away and I had a fight with street children."

The only other customer turned round to look at me. A complete stranger, she bought me a quarter pound of marzipan potatoes, then linked her arm through mine and escorted me to our house. On the way she exclaimed:

"You must not blame the Germans for what is happening. It is simply the Volksrut, the people's fury, that has broken out."

I was too miserable and too polite to ask her what we had done to stir up this remarkably well organized fury. I hadn't known at the time, but the pretext for the indiscriminate imprisonment of Jewish men and for the wholesale destruction of Jewish property and homes on this Ninth to Tenth of November 1938 -- which history named Kristallnacht on account of all the smashed glass of Jewish shops -- was the shooting of a German diplomat in Paris by a young Jew whose parents had suddenly been deported from Germany in the Polenaktion during the night of the 28th to the 29th of October, when Jews of Polish origin were expelled to the Polish frontier. Their parents or grandparents had come to Germany in order to escape pogroms and other antisemitic manifestations in Poland. Who would have thought then that enlightened and cultured Germany would outdo even Poland in its persecution of the Jews? Poland did not want these Jews either, nor was it willing to cooperate with Germany, so now they were stuck in no-man's-land on the Polish-German frontier, many of them without so much as a change of clothes. The possessions and property they had left behind were confiscated by the German government.

Over supper I told the family of my adventures on the way to the shop, about the kind lady, and how the Christian downstairs neighbours had come from their flat to see me safely upstairs to our front door.

"I'm sorry those ruffians gave you such a bad time," Mama said, "you'll all of you have to be on the look-out for them. Cowards that they are, they only attack when they are in the majority. But how kind of that lady and of the neighbours. You see, in spite of everything, one must not generalize, not all Germans are bad."



"Rosi, you are being sentimental," Oma put in. "Your 'good' Germans may not agree with all of the things the Nazis do -- but only in private, they are afraid for their own skins. Had they spoken out earlier on, when the Nazi party was still weak, it would never have come to these excesses."

"That's all very well, Mama, but we must never forget that we Jews enjoyed Germany's hospitality for centuries."

"Hospitality? Why, my ancestors and you Emanuels and thousands of other Jewish families have lived in Germany far longer than a great many of the so-called members of the Herrenvolk. We've always been loyal citizens, didn't innumerable Jewish men and boys die in the Kaiser's army during the World War, including your cousin Leo Mendel and his brother, Samson, who had his leg shot off? Haven't we striven for Germany's wellbeing in the professions, in medicine, in commerce and in the arts? Surely, you don't seriously think that we owe the Germans a special 'thank you'?"

"Maybe it is because we've lived here for so many centuries," Mama continued the discussion, "that some of us have come to forget our ancient homeland. Yes, I know," as Oma was about to interrupt her, "that we pray three times a day for our return to the Land of Israel, but until recent years, how many German Jews actually packed up and went to Palestine? It was always only a trickle." She continued almost inaudibly, as though to herself: "It was my dream once to go there with Isskar, to be a pioneer and help rebuild the neglected and eroded land. But soon after our wedding the responsibilities began to pile up. Isskar's niece, Fanny, left an orphan, came to live with us just six months after we'd been married. And then the five children were born, and there was Isskar's old mother" and now she actually whispered, "and there was you, left a widow, and me your only surviving child -- by then it was quite out of the question that we could simply leave and go. Maybe, what we are

suffering now is God's punishment for our having felt too much at home here in Germany, for having forgotten almost that we live in exile."

"None of this exonerates the Germans," Oma had the last word.

It was after supper that evening that Mama took me into her confidence.

"As you can imagine, my most important task now is to find somewhere for us all to immigrate to. Not that we haven't tried before, of course. But with such a large family as ours: Papa and me, my mother and you five children, it has proved fruitless so far. I heard that the Gestapo releases Jews from concentration camps if they can prove that some country is willing to admit them. First thing in the morning I'm going to the Jewish Community Offices, maybe they can advise me." And it was then she had told me something of our present financial situation.

"I'm truly sorry to burden you with all this, but I know that I can rely on you."

I wasn't a bit sorry, in fact I was thrilled to be taken into Mama's confidence, and for the first time in my life to be treated like the mature and dependable girl I felt myself to be. It was partly my fault that I had been treated like an irresponsible child. I was neither quiet, serious nor automatically obedient like Beni who, it seems, was born with an adult head on his shoulders. True, the shoulders resented this untimely burden and tended to stoop, so that he was sent to a course of orthopaedic exercises which he hated. But this was considered more natural than my love of sport. School was made bearable by the twice weekly gym lessons.

School had changed its character. Lessons were supposed to be taken as seriously as always -- when they did take place. As the younger teachers emigrated or were "absent," the synonym for being in a concentration camp, there were not enough of them to go round. During their supposedly free periods the remaining teachers were sent to classes they did not



normally teach, they neither knew us nor very often the subject they were suddenly called upon to teach. Instead of considering the difficulties these teachers had to contend with, we shamelessly exploited the situation and were as uncooperative and insubordinate as we dared. When our regular teachers took our class we behaved normally. Our class had been shrinking progressively as girls left Germany with their families or even without them on children's transports. Some parents who despaired of being able to emigrate, registered their children for these transports, organized in a number of European countries after Kristallnacht. Upon arrival, these children were sent to live in groups in specially established hostels or they were distributed among local families willing to take in a refugee child.

An atmosphere as of being abandoned on a sinking ship began to make itself felt among us girls who were left behind. Every now and then we received letters from former classmates from Holland, Brazil, the Argentine, Palestine, the United States or from England. Our beloved class teacher had left us two years ago for the Argentine. Being young and single he had succeeded in finding a country to accept him. As an ardent Zionist his first choice had been Palestine. However, the policy pursued by Great Britain in Mandatory Palestine, which permitted free Arab immigration, but severely restricted that of Jews from fear of the Arabs, had forced him to abandon his dream of becoming a farmer in Palestine. At first he worked as a peon on a farm for Russian Jews in the province of Entre Rios. "They were poor people", he wrote, "so master and servant hungered together. Then my parents came from Germany and I had to leave. ICA -- the Jewish Colonizing Association -- offered me a piece of land, called a 'camp', in the northern part of the province where many German Jewish colonists had settled. So we took a camp there. It was still completely virgin forest, about 15 km from the nearest village. When the children manage to come to school at all, they ride on horses." He had called one of his two dogs Mogli -- we had been in the middle of reading Kipling's

Jungle Book when he left. The other dog he called Shomer, Hebrew for guard, because he was such an excellent watchdog. This teacher knew a great deal about farming for his father had been a farmer in South Germany. Under this teacher's guidance we had turned a large piece of waste ground into a flourishing vegetable garden. The produce we sold to teachers at our school and thus we had more money to spend on the annual class party.

Then there were girls from whom we never heard again. Among them, the girls who had been expelled as a result of the Polenaktion. We had not been aware of their Polish antecedents. Occasionally, our class actually grew when parents living in smaller towns or villages sent their children to cities which had Jewish schools as Jewish children could no longer attend Christian schools. Sometimes the whole family managed to move. This is how Vera had come to us. Vera knew little of religious observances and no Hebrew, our ancient language, that had been one of our school subjects from the age of seven. We had learnt to translate easy texts in the Bible from the original Hebrew into German and to conduct very simple conversations in modern Hebrew, as spoken in Palestine. Miriam, Vera and I now formed a threesome. Vera's father was born in Hamburg and had enjoyed a traditional Jewish education, but Vera's mother had been brought up unobservant. She did not cover her hair with a wig like all the married women in our immediate circle of family and friends, she actually used make-up and though a middle-aged woman of around forty, dressed in bright colours and wore high heels. She was an obvious outsider who did not fit into our narrowly circumscribed society -- though at that time I took our way of life for granted and even considered ourselves liberal and broad-minded.

My parents did not approve of my friendship with Vera. They must have feared that her irreligious upbringing might influence me. They need not have worried. Miriam and I were fired with missionary zeal. Soon Vera even joined the Ezra, our religious Zionist-



oriented youth movement. She knitted her father a skullcap which he consented to wear, except when she happened to annoy him, when he pulled it off his head and threw it at her. Vera's mother confided to me that Vera had asked her to keep a kosher household; however, this meant buying new crockery, pots and pans, etc., which she could not really afford to do.

Someone had passed on to Vera a black, fitted, low-cut velvet dress which could make a super dressing-up costume for Purim. I tried it on. It fitted me like a glove, but with the face of a thirteen-year-old child and with my two plaits dangling down to my waist, it looked ludicrous. I pranced into our livingroom. All Papa's worst fears were being realized: Under the influence of irreligious Vera and her, no doubt, free and easy upbringing, he saw his own daughter turning into a scarlet woman, right there in front of his eyes:

"Take that vile thing of yours off immediately," he thundered.

"It's not mine, it's Vera's and it's only a joke. You don't really believe I was going to wear it?"

He was beyond reasoning with. His large peasant ears had turned scarlet, his grey-blue eyes flashed steel. There was going to be thunder and lightning -- so I beat a hasty retreat, quite at a loss to account for such a violent outburst. Henceforth, my parents tried to discourage my friendship with Vera-of-the-Black-Velvet-Dress. This had precisely the opposite effect. I tried to be extra nice to Vera, to make up for their completely unreasonable and unjust attitude.

Now, Vera's father, like mine, was imprisoned in a concentration camp. Most of the Jewish families who had been living in Germany for centuries, simply refused to believe that this present persecution could be anything more than a passing phase, a fever that would burn itself out; that just as soon, so they fondly believed, as that madman, Adolf Hitler, who was not even a German, but an Austrian, had been got rid of by the mass of sensible Germans,

everything would be lovely once more in the German garden. German Jews loved Germany, but it had turned out to be a one-sided love affair. However, by 1938, after five years of ever increasing persecution, even those over-optimistic Jews had learnt to their cost that nearly all Germans, even the "decent" ones, had been corrupted by the Nazis and had jumped on the Nazi bandwagon. Wealthy Jews had been stripped of their assets, their businesses had been taken away from them, the money going into the coffers of the Nazi party. On one hand, Germany made life more and more impossible for its Jews, and on the other it put any number of obstacles in the way of Jews trying to leave a fatherland that so obviously no longer wanted them. Jews were getting desperate to leave Germany, but they had left it very late. Even countries willing to take in Jews would only admit a limited number and generally only if they could prove that they were not going to be a financial burden on their host-country; and since many countries suffered from unemployment, they would not grant the newcomers permission to work and earn their living.

On her own now, and with increasing urgency, Mama continued her search. No even remotely promising avenue was left unexplored. About a year ago she had written to a second cousin who had immigrated to New York forty years ago. Contact had slacked over the years, but of late Beni's stamp collection benefited from the many letters that crossed the Atlantic. She kept us posted of the results -- or lack of them -- of her endeavours to secure affidavits for us. It needed several comfortably situated guarantors to obtain an affidavit for our large family. She herself was not well off, and she did not find it easy to beg for favours among her relatives and acquaintances. But finally her efforts were crowned with success. We now possessed the necessary affidavits, but there was still the problem of the quota. Only a limited number of foreigners were admitted to the United States every year from any one country, and even with an affidavit we would have to wait another year at least until our quota number



came up. Mama racked her brain how to overcome this obstacle which barred the way to Papa's release from the concentration camp and to our escape from Nazi Germany. She came up with an idea; true, it was far-fetched, but then, anything had to be tried. Her father used to travel to the New York branch of the family's travel agency and had acquired American citizenship shortly before she was born. This had lapsed, however, as a result of the World War when Germany and the United States were at war. Would her former nationality enable us to jump the queue and gain us admission to the States outside the quota? The answer was disappointing: We would have to wait our turn like everyone else, but once in the States we would be granted citizenship more quickly than other immigrants. Since getting there was our problem, this privilege would not really help us.

Still, one of Mama's S O S letters to friends and relatives abroad bore exotic results. It arrived with the Saturday morning post. The document was headed by a white sun on a blue background. (I have the original.) The typewritten text made Mama's heart leap:

### Visa

We hereby declare that we have no objection to issue Mr. Isskar Emanuel

-----  
all/of German nationality, visa/s for China, provided that the person/s concerned present/s themselves/himself/herself at the Consulate with valid passport/s.

The Chinese Consul at Amsterdam

Yuan Tieh

Amsterdam, November 18, 1938

Mama was jubilant. Surely, the Gestapo would release Papa on the strength of this visa. Although it was the Sabbath, Mama took a taxi to the Gestapo headquarters in distant Duestern Strasse -- in English: Gloomy Street -- so as to arrive before the office closed for the weekend since any delay could prove fatal for Papa. She explained to the driver that as an observant Jewess she must not handle money on the Sabbath, but would send the fare money to his house still that same evening. He agreed to this arrangement and gave her his address. After the termination of the Sabbath Beni took the money and a box of cigarettes to the taxi driver's house. His wife opened the door and smiling, pointed to the cigarettes: "That wasn't really necessary." At the Gestapo, the official refused to accept the visa: "These matters are now dealt with by your own Jewish Community officials." What courage to face those Nazi officials whose dearest wish it surely was to see us all dead. Since there was no justification to desecrate the Sabbath further, Mama walked all the way home in pouring rain, arriving drenched to the skin. Her first words on reaching home: "You shouldn't have waited for me with dinner."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Just look at it, isn't it marvellous!" Triumphantlly she waved the precious document at the two officials.

"And are you really willing, Mrs. Emanuel, to go with your family to China? For once your husband is released on the strength of this visa, that's where you'll be made to go."

Mother drew herself up to all of her five feet two inches, her large, round, brown eyes aglow. "Not really, but if that's the only way to get my husband back."



"And how will you present yourselves at the Chinese Consulate in Amsterdam? You haven't got Dutch visas, have you? No, we cannot advise you to apply for your husband's release on the strength of this questionable Chinese visa."

Mother was speechless -- with indignation.

The two women exchanged glances and nodded to each other.

"Negotiations are under way for the release of a certain category of prisoners, your husband falls within it. More we mustn't tell you. So we strongly advise you not to rush things with the Chinese visa -- be patient for a few more days."

Mama was in a quandary. She realized that the officials, whom she had known personally for many years, only wanted to serve her best interests. They knew as well, or even better, that every day, every hour spent inside a concentration camp could cost the prisoner his life. She was certain that their advice was not lightly given -- and she decided to take it.

For ten days we knew nothing about Papa's whereabouts. Then, a postcard arrived telling us he was well. (I have this card.) The postmark showed that it had been sent from "Sachsenhausen, Oranienburg, Summer Resort near Berlin". There was a concentration camp at Sachsenhausen. Though the address was anything but reassuring, it was good to know that Papa had been alive at the time of writing. Prisoners were allowed to write twice a month, but letters took a long time to arrive; the next one arrived quite some time after Papa had already returned to us. It was written on an official form (I have this letter), but the text was in Papa's own handwriting. No secret was made any more of the true nature of the "summer resort," it was printed in red lettering at the top:

## CONCENTRATION CAMP

## SACHSENHAUSEN

Oranienburg near Berlin

My exact address:

Isskar Emanuel

No. 10772

Block 60a

"My beloved ones!

You will have received my postcard; I hope that you are all well and that everything is all right with you. I too am quite all right, considering; I am healthy and cheerful. All good wishes to you, my dear little Gitta, for your ninth birthday, remain such a well-behaved, good child, causing her parents much joy. How did you spend Grandmother's birthday? Was Aunt Dorette with you or did she change her plan? Rosi dear, I would like you to pay the telephone, gas, electricity; for rent postponement talk to Rendsburg; as you very likely have no money, apply to the revenue office for delay of payment of business and income tax, and cancel the telephone. At the end of the letter I am writing a power of attorney to the Deutsche Bank which you will hand in there, dear Rosi [Adolphsplatz] so that they can transfer the small sum on my account to the postal cash account as you have no power of attorney at the bank. I am keen to know what you have done about the emigration, whether you have spoken to the Synagogue Committee of the religion classes. Are Siegfried and David still in Hamburg? How does it go with the children's homework? I hope and beg of them to be really industrious, completely obedient in all things and to do everything to please dear Grandmother and Mama. There is absolutely no need for you to worry about me. However, I am very



worried what you live on. It was fortunate that we still took in fuel. Dear Raphael, if you want to make Papa happy, then be a good boy. Has Mama already registered you for school? What do you hear from Family Lambig?

My very warmest greetings to you all and a thousand kisses from your loving and constantly thinking of you,

Son, Husband and Papa"

Yes, Siegfried and David were still with us, but not for long. Soon, Siegfried left on a children's transport for Holland and David -- his father was a well-known Rabbi -- for Palestine. The two boys had joined our household after the headmaster of the Talmud Torah had asked my parents if they were willing to provide a home for a boy from outside Hamburg, no longer able to attend the non-Jewish grammar school in their own town. Mama did not object to the extra work this would entail and the added income was more than welcome in those hard times. She was worried though, lest the strange boys prove a bad influence on us children. The headmaster promised to vet them carefully, certainly neither of the boys left anything to be desired on that score.

Family Lambig, our dear and refined downstairs neighbours, who had a shop for Jewish books and religious articles, had been deported a few weeks earlier at the time of the Polenaktion.

The allusion to the Synagogue Committee referred to the weekday afternoon and Sunday morning lessons when Papa gave Talmud and religious observance classes to boys under the auspices of the Association of Synagogues and the Jewish Community. Papa was really a frustrated teacher; it was only at his father's insistence that he had made a career of

finance and business rather than of teaching. It became his favourite hobby and spare time activity for which he would not accept payment until just lately when pressed by necessity when his income progressively diminished as one after the other of his customers were forced into giving up dealing with Jews. His years of unstinting, voluntary work in the service of Jewish education was going to play a major role in our escape from Germany.

It was indeed fortunate that we had bought a supply of coal when our coal merchant was still able to sell to Jews. He was no Nazi and must have been a knowledgeable Christian. After I had given him our order he asked me: "Child, do you know the meaning of your name 'Emanuel'?" I nodded. Of course I knew and because I was so proud of our beautiful Hebrew name, I had long ago decided to marry Uncle Markus and Aunt Marthe's eldest son so as not to have to give it up ever. "It means 'God is with us'," he continued, "and don't ever forget it."

The twenty-eighth of Marcheshvan was Oma's seventieth birthday. We celebrated birthdays according to the Jewish, lunar, and not according to the solar calendar year. Her "civil" birthday was on November 13, but that day passed unnoticed. Hers was the favourite birthday, apart from one's own, of course, for Oma held the novel view that the "birthday child" should not only receive gifts, but also dispense them. And since she was a woman who acted on her principles, each of us children was given a small, but well chosen gift, such as a pretty notebook or scribbling pad with an attached pencil, a tiny bouncy ball or a skipping rope. Even though it was a special birthday, there could obviously be no celebration because Papa was still in the concentration camp, but Aunt Dorette, Oma's sister, had come all the way from Frankfurt-on-Main, and there were shop-bought cakes for tea. Mama baked Berches every Friday, these were plaited Sabbath loaves made from white flour -- when available -- as well as several huge, flat yeast cakes topped with crisp crumbles, apple slices or halved



plums. The cakes lasted until the following Thursday, by which time they were well past their prime, but still tasty. Thus, shop-bought cakes were a rare luxury in our home. Aune Dorette was happy to be with us and also to be away from Frankfurt.

"Why, you live in paradise here in Hamburg," she declared. "You can walk in the street without always having 'Jew, Jew' shouted at you and there are shops that still sell to Jews!"

"Yes," Mama corroborated, "they couldn't even find enough local men to vandalize the synagogues so that men had to be brought in from outside Hamburg to do the job and they weren't supposed to burn the synagogues either." As great local patriots we felt inordinately proud of Hamburg's comparative liberality, though as it turned out, there was not all that much justification for our pride.

It was nearly four weeks since that fateful Tenth of November. With each day that passed we got more desperately worried about Papa and the other Jewish men exposed to the mercy not only of the sadistic camp commandants and guards, but also the freezing winter weather that had set in. Mama continued her frantic search for our emigration. It was rumoured that Equador had expressed its willingness to accept some Jews from Germany. Uncle Markus in Rotterdam tried to secure a permit for us to enter Curacao, a Dutch colony, where he had business connections. We looked up these exotic places in an atlas, and to us children it did not matter in the least whether our future lay in South America, China or the Dutch East Indies -- they all sounded equally exciting. In the end it was none of those outlandish places which restored Papa to us. On December 6th, a stranger 'phoned. He had just returned from Sachsenhausen and he told us that Papa too had been released and should be home still that evening. The release of Jewish men from concentration camps who had served at the front in the war had been under negotiation at the time the community officials

advised Mama not to apply for Papa's release on the strength of the Chinese visa. Papa had been on active service as a conscript on the Russian front.

It was then that he had become a chain smoker -- from hunger. Papa strictly observed the Jewish dietary laws. His mother regularly sent him food parcels, but they frequently went astray, so cigarettes had become a substitute for food. His German comrades found his religious observance useful when they came upon food dumps abandoned by enemy troops. Knowing that Papa would not touch the food, he was ordered to stay behind on guard until arrangements were made for its removal to base.

It was long past our usual bedtime and still Papa had not come. Mama told us to go to bed, she would let us know as soon as he arrived. Though they tried hard to stay awake, the three younger children were asleep when Papa did come home. I lay in bed straining my ears for the sound of his arrival, but I heard nothing until my parents quietly entered the room. Papa bent over sleeping Gitta, a smile hovering on his lips, then he walked across the room and sat down at the foot of my bed. Wordlessly we gazed at one another. His hair, moustache and beard had been shaved off and this brought out a ridiculous resemblance to a rather stupid cousin of ours. With a sigh, Papa pulled himself to his feet, we wound our arms round each other and kissed good night. I fell asleep with joy in my heart at Papa's physical presence and with deep anguish at the expression in his eyes as of a hunted animal. His eyes had not yet returned to us, they were still fixed upon another, terrible world.



Chapter 2

Papa relieved mother of her temporary position as head of the family. She returned to her former role of help-meet, of dutiful wife and devoted mother to his five children. And to my chagrin I was deprived of my status of confidante and was once more excluded from adult confabulations. Much later I understood that this demotion was not intended as a slight, rather that it was out of love for me that my parents sought to restore my rudely interrupted childhood to me, but of course, once that frontier is crossed there is no going back. On long walks, along snow-covered, unfrequented roads Papa told me something of those four harrowing weeks inside the concentration camp. His very first remark gave me ample food for thought:

"At our release we were made to promise never to tell anything of what had taken place in the camp," and yet, here he was about to do just that. Maybe, a promise exacted under duress or one made to a Nazi concentration camp commandant didn't count?

"After leaving you, I was taken in a Black Maria to Fuhlsbüttel Prison. The place was crammed with Jewish prisoners like me. From there we were sent on to Sachsenhausen."

He took off his spectacles, pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and set about polishing the lenses, an absentminded look in his somehow naked looking eyes. He replaced the hankie and put the spectacles back on his nose. I got the impression that, after all, he was not certain whether he was doing the right thing to unburden himself to me.

"Yes?" I breathed. Papa sighed and continued.

"When one of the prisoners died -- or was shot -- and we carried him away for burial, while we performed this last service for the poor devil, the guards made us sing jolly marching songs. 'High up on the Yellow Wagon' was a favourite of one of the guards." It

used to be a favourite of mine too, but no longer." Papa continued: "My army service of all those years ago stood me in good stead for I didn't succumb to the harsh conditions. At roll-call, never stand at the beginning or end of a row or in any other conspicuous place. And something else, there were far fewer cases of suicide among us religious men."

I was deeply shocked for I had been taught that to take one's own life was a heinous offence. To renounce life, the most precious gift God has bestowed on us, was a sin for which one could, of course, never atone, consequently a suicide was not buried in consecrated ground.

"Our one meal a day," Papa went on, "consisted of whale soup, a watery brew with bits of whale meat floating around in it. As you know, whale is not kosher, so that many of the observant Jews refused to touch the soup, but I told them that they must at least eat the liquid and maybe leave the pieces of meat. My decision was based on the verse in the Prophet Ezekiel that man is meant to live, not die by observing God's commandments."

I was proud to be chosen by Papa as his confidante and hoped that by relating at least some of his experiences -- the less gruesome ones as I found out later -- he might find a little relief from all he'd had to endure since that fateful Tenth of November.

It had also been on a tenth of November, but in the year 1859, that my maternal great-great-grandfather, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the founder and headmaster of the Jewish elementary and grammar schools in Frankfurt-on-Main, conducted the centenary celebration for Friedrich Schiller who was born on the tenth of November 1759. The festive occasion is graphically described in a booklet by one of Rabbi Hirsch's former pupils (Hermann Schwab, Aus der Schützenstrasse, Frankfurt-on-Main 1923): "To this day the sounds of the Schiller Festival of the year 1859 ring in our ears, the ears of the children and grandchildren of that generation. On that memorable tenth of November, on the platform of the small hall of the

old school building, in front of children, parents and representatives of the municipality, stood the headmaster and delivered a speech in honour of Schiller. Schiller's verses flowed from his lips and he easily found connections between the Jewish world of thought and the poet's spiritual heritage."

Rabbi S. R. Hirsch advocated a symbiosis of strict observance of the minutiae of Jewish religious law along with full participation in European culture so long as the latter was compatible with the former. His translation of the Pentateuch from the original Hebrew into German and his commentary have been translated into English and Hebrew. He also wrote several books and many articles which reflect his Weltanschauung.

After Rabbi Hirsch was widowed and until his death in 1888, a granddaughter would keep house ~~for~~ him for two years after which period a younger granddaughter took over. Oma told me a little of her time with her grandfather:

"He had a wonderful way with young people," she told me, "he was genuinely interested in all they did. And busy though he always was with his scholarly and educational work, he never forgot to ask me how I had enjoyed the concert, theatre or opera I had attended -- and to listen to my reply."

Oma had no patience for the confined social life of her circle where everyone knew what was cooking in their neighbours' saucepans, literally and figuratively speaking. After ~~she~~ he married my grandfather, Jacob Mendel, who lived in Hamburg, she decided that she would return to Frankfurt only to visit her parents, and after they died she declared that if any of her siblings wanted to see her, they'd have to come to Hamburg. By now, of her five sisters and one brother, only two sisters were still alive. Aunt Jeanette had moved to a daughter in the United States, and it was the remaining Frankfurt sister, Aunt Dorette, who had come to Hamburg for Oma's seventieth birthday.



To be precise, Aunt Dorette was Oma's half-sister. Oma's own mother, Betty Oestreich, after whom I was called Betty, died when Oma was still a little girl. Her father, Julius Hirsch, remarried. His choice fell on eighteen-year-old Miriam Adler from Luebeck. On a visit to Frankfurt, when she was fifteen, Mama plucked up her courage and asked Grandmother Miriam, widowed by then, a question that had long occupied her thoughts:

"Granny, how could you, an eighteen-year-old girl, bring yourself to marry a man double your age and with six children?" Grandmother, pretty and charming even as an old lady, did not mind the question:

"You see, Rosi, it flattered me that your grandfather travelled all the way from Frankfurt to Luebeck in order to see me, he was a fine looking man and of very good family, and -- he came by himself, the six children he had left at home."

• "Having accepted my grandfather with his six children," mother continued, "she decided that a dowry was not really called for, it should rather go to her sister, Esther, who then married Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach also of Luebeck."

\* \* \* \* \*

Oma was a light sleeper and the early morning noises in the street woke her. She was the first one up, and as I already mentioned, it was she who woke us children in the morning. She also prepared our breakfast cocoa, a buttered round of black bread and half a roll. As a little girl I ate the roll before the bread. I had been told that when the time was ripe, the Messiah would come, which might be any time. We would have to get up, leaving everything behind, and straight away follow him to the Promised Land. I would at least have eaten the roll which I much preferred to the bread. After dinner -- which was eaten lunch-time during

the week -- she took a nap and at about half past three Mama brought her a buttered roll with a portion of jam in a little dish and a steaming, fragrant cup of coffee, all prettily set out on a small tray covered with a white, crisply starched cloth. This sight always made my heart glow, for here was my mother, lovingly obeying one of the Ten Commandments -- of which we were forcibly reminded from time to time by Papa: "Honour thy father and thy mother . . ." My relationship with Oma had improved of late, she no longer seemed to mind my quick tongue quite so much or, maybe, I had at last gained some control over it. If I'd managed to finish my homework by the time she drank her coffee and I did not have to take the three younger children to the park, I sat down on a chair in the alcove formed by the end of the sofa on which she reclined and the window that looked out on to a row of poplars in the back garden and to the Klaus, the synagogue we had watched being vandalized. We read our library books in companionable silence or I listened to Oma's tales of her youth. It was here in this intimate setting that I became acquainted with the soft kernel of Oma's nature, which she hid so successfully inside a hard shell. She told me of the arrival of their new, young mother from Luebeck:

"Everyone was busy preparing for the great day, the whole house shone and sparkled, there was a wonderfully satisfying smell of cooking and baking. Our Aunt Doris had made a cake so large that it wouldn't fit into an ordinary domestic oven, so it was taken to the baker. Aunt Jennie, my eldest sister, was asked to help the maid carry the cakes home from the baker. Jennie carried Aunt Doris's cake. It looked and smelled delicious and simply made her mouth water. Gingerly, she broke a crumb from the bottom of the cake; it lived up fully to her expectation. But something awful happened -- by the time they arrived home, her finger had poked a hole right through the cake. She was to be forever cured of greediness; you know what her punishment was?"

"No, what was it?"

"She had to sleep over at Aunt Doris's and so wouldn't be present to welcome our new mother." I was thoroughly shocked at such cruelty.

"Our new mother had a lovely sense of humour and of fun and I'm sure didn't care a rap about a hole poked in a cake. Her first act as our new mother was to do away with our horrid, red, old-fashioned and scratchy nightgowns and to get us new, modern, frilly ones. She was a wonderful mother and never once treated us six differently from her own two."

\* \* \* \* \*

Oma must have realized that at nearly fourteen it was high time I knew some of the facts of life. She knew that her shy, puritan daughter would find it well nigh impossible to discuss such matters with me, so she skilfully brought up the subject of menstruation. She was satisfied when I told her that one of my school friends, Marianne, distantly related to her and therefore approved of, had enlightened me on the subject.

"Beni has known about it for some years, he learnt it in his Talmud lessons, yet he never breathes a word about it to anyone."

I knew that it was not a subject for idle discussion and I felt proud of discreet Beni, but I resented that a boy should be taught such intimate, purely feminine matters. Oma went on to explain that with old age the monthly period ceases, whereupon I asked hopefully whether my breasts, which embarrassed me a great deal, would then also disappear. Oma undid the top buttons of her black dress and showed me her bra-less, empty-looking, sagging breasts. No, that was certainly nothing to look forward to. I was thrilled by Oma's confidence



in me, but shocked at her exposing a part of her body to me which should always be decently covered.

Now that Oma was seventy, there was no denying that she was an old lady, yet she was as lively, agile and light of step as always. The light bulb in the kitchen had burnt out. Oma fetched the step-ladder and by standing on the top rung she could just about reach the bulb. There she balanced, holding on to absolutely nothing. Down below stood Mama, her arms embracing the ladder to keep it steady, her head held up imploringly: "Mama, please Mama, come down, do come down already!" Oma took her time and with a mischievous and slightly supercilious smile looked down at her more timid daughter. We breathed a sigh of relief when at last she deigned to descend and once more stood on the blue and white chequered floor tiles. I hadn't known whether to laugh with Oma or commiserate with Mama. Oma was very quick and had no patience with anyone slower than herself. As a result, when my mother married, she knew very little about running a home, for Oma was unable to delegate work, it was so much quicker to do it oneself than to explain. Teaching had been one of the few professions open to girls when Oma left school. For a while she considered becoming a teacher at the school founded by her grandfather, but at the last moment she changed her mind: there were too many slow-witted, stupid children and she realized that she lacked the necessary patience.

Oma's cousin, Rahel Hirsch, a daughter of Aunt Doris and Uncle (Dr.) Mendel Hirsch, studied medicine. Since women were barred from medical studies in Germany she attended the universities of Zurich and Strasbourg. In 1913 she was the first female physician in Prussia and the third woman in Germany to obtain the title of professor. She abandoned her family's religious lifestyle. In 1938 she immigrated to England where she died in 1953. I

discovered her existence by chance, many years after her death, nor had Mama ever heard of her.

Mama too was a highly intelligent woman; she had been a brilliant pupil at school and later became a successful accountant at a private bank, much appreciated for her efficiency, her discretion and for her kind and helpful nature.

But unlike Oma she was not at all sure of herself. Before her marriage she used to defer to her mother in most things and afterwards, Papa, with his charming and forceful personality, was the dominant partner in their marriage. His six feet towered above her five feet, two inches. Father proudly told us that when they married he could encircle her tiny waist with his two hands. After having given birth to five children she had rounded out and was most comfortable to cuddle up against when one felt in need of consolation. She missed nothing and had dreadfully keen ears. With Papa in the room we could safely open the cake tin and help ourselves to a slice of Sabbath cake; even if we accidentally dropped the metal lid, he did not so much as raise his eyes from the Talmud page in which he was immersed. But with Mama, though deeply engrossed in a book, the moment one as much as gingerly lifted the lid, her head shot up and her large, round, accusing eyes looked straight into our guilt-ridden ones. She very sensibly told us to ask for a piece of cake instead of trying to filch one, but we felt that while it was all right to ask for a slice of bread it was not nice to request such a luxury as cake.

Many years later Papa told me that both Mama and her father had been under Oma's thumb. When our two grandmothers were widowed, my paternal grandmother, a patient, kind and diplomatic woman, moved in with Oma. The two elderly ladies got on well together, but when Jews were forbidden to employ non-Jewish maids and they had to dismiss theirs, a different arrangement had to be made. Papa's mother moved to her daughter and Oma came

to us. She was of real help to my mother for we too had to dismiss our maid. Oma took over much of the cooking from Mama. However, she was somewhat of a trial for Papa who had no intention to relinquish the reins and stop being master in his own home. There were never any arguments in front of us children, but occasionally I sensed a certain tension. It was only much later that I understood an incident which had me vexed and puzzled at the time. My quick tongue frequently got me into trouble. I had cheeked Oma, and as soon as Papa came home she complained to him. Without further ado I received a slap from his heavy hand, whereupon Oma turned on him: "Why did you do that?" My anger was directed at her rather than at Papa who had punished me without giving me a chance to justify myself. Hadn't she complained of my misbehaviour so that he would punish me? It all seemed highly illogical and unsatisfactory at the time.

I was to feel Papa's hand on my face soon again. On fine afternoons I often had to take the "little ones" -- ten-year-old Jacob, Gitta who was eight and five-year-old Raphael - - to Innocentia Park. I would rather have played with my friends, Miriam, Vera and Marianne, but there was no help for it, the children needed to play in the fresh air and to be got out from under Mama's feet. And since there was no longer a maid, there was no-one but me to take them. I was always told exactly when to be back home. Surely, it was not my fault if my watch had stopped and we arrived back home half an hour late? Papa opened the front-door and I had my face slapped before I could as much as open my mouth to utter my excuse. By the following day I had screwed up sufficient courage to tax him with the unfairness of this undeserved slap. "Maybe you didn't deserve it this time," he conceded, "but many's the time you deserved a slap and didn't get one." I had no immediate answer to this logic and was pleased that Papa had admitted his error -- I even admired him for his quick



repartee -- yet some nagging doubt as to the fairness of this arrangement would not let itself be suppressed.

On one occasion I had gone to the park without a watch and so I sent Jacob to ask some grown-up for the time; he happened to ask an acquaintance of our parents. The man asked him:

"What do you want to be when you grow up?"

"I want to be big and strong so that I can beat up my brothers and sisters."

Jacob suffered badly from being the middle-child. "When there's a treat for the big ones, I belong to the little ones, and when there's a treat for the little ones then I suddenly belong to the big ones," he complained. He had an unfortunate habit of getting on the wrong side of us children. Gitta and I did not appreciate his thirst for knowledge when it involved blinding our dolls in order to discover how the mechanism operated that enabled them to open and close their bright glass eyes. Once he had discovered that the wheels of our toy train gave forth a mournful whistle when one blew through them -- after their removal from the carriage, of course -- the train was put out of action for good. One could write with the neck of lead toy soldiers, so Beni was forced to command a headless army. Where I resorted to quick and scathing repartee to make my point or gain attention, Jacob relied on his fists. Being three years his senior I was able to hold my own, but poor Gitta, two years his junior, invariably ended up screeching for help. Jacob seemed unable to grasp why he was not more popular with us children. When he was already a much loved, grown-up brother, he confessed that for a time he had half believed himself to be an adopted child. Mama tried to counteract his feeling of being discriminated against by showing him extra love and by expounding on his virtues as the most helpful one of us around the house, but her well-meaning endeavours only called our ire upon his hapless head and so had the opposite effect from that intended by her.

To add to his misery, in a family where it was considered a mark of esteem to be tall and slim, he was relatively short and chubby, though in the end fate was kind to him for he grew to be the tallest of us five children.

One might have thought that the larger and serious concerns of our life ought to have precluded silly squabbles among us children, yet the day to day issues of life retained their importance, maybe on account of their immediacy. On the surface life returned to some kind of normality. We continued to go to school, but at least in our class, a subtle change had come over our attitude to it for it had largely changed from an academic to a social institution. We no longer regarded our lessons and our examinations of vital importance to our future. The one exception was our English lesson. Our teacher hoped that at least some of us might still make it to England or the United States. She therefore taught us to write letters of application for office jobs and we read a book called "Everyday Life in England," which impressed me most with the information that every family occupied a whole house, that all the houses in a street looked alike and even so no names were written upon the front door so that if you forgot the number of the house to which you wanted to go, you had a problem on your hands.

Our teacher employed an excellent method to help us acquire a good pronunciation. We learnt a few simple stories by heart, one of them was "Jack and the Beanstalk"; we then listened to a record of the story in the King's English, and finally each girl had to recite a few sentences along with the record. We found it quite impossible to maintain the same tempo -- either the girl or the record galloped away at top speed. The effect was hilarious, but we stifled our laughter for our teacher was a strict disciplinarian and brooked no nonsense. On the first and last day of term, as a special treat, she read to us from Alice in Wonderland -- those were the duller lessons of the year, for she had seriously overestimated

our proficiency. We appreciated her knowledge and her obvious love for the subject she taught so well, but right to the end she remained an impersonal and unknowable woman. One morning her lesson was given by another teacher, our teacher had left for Britain without telling us beforehand. Years later I managed to secure her address -- she worked as a domestic servant with an English family -- I thanked her for the excellent teaching which had stood me in such good stead. Her reply pleased me greatly: "You always had a good pronunciation." Not once had she praised any of her pupils in class.

At the time, the fact that I was taught English so well and by a teacher who also taught in the grammar school was a much needed sop to my wounded pride. At the age of ten, in the fourth year of primary school, one sat for the grammar school entrance examination. Failure meant four years of elementary education, leaving school at the age of fourteen. In our school, the grammar and the elementary schools were housed in the same building, but scholastically and as far as prestige was concerned, they were worlds apart. Only dunces went to elementary school, certainly not the children of our family. I was a good student except in arithmetic, I could not work up much enthusiasm for dead numbers and though I passed all tests and examinations, they rarely rated more than pass marks. The day of the grammar school examination had arrived. In alphabetical order our form-mistress read out the names of the girls who were to sit for the exam. One by one they rose and went to the class-room where they would sit for it. My name, Emanuel, ought to have been called long ago. When the teacher had finished and was putting away the list, I blurted out:

"Please, you forgot my name." She looked at me in surprise, then in consternation.

"Haven't you been told?" It was obvious that I had not. "It was decided not to let you sit for the entrance examination."



"But how can I get into grammar school if I'm not allowed to sit for the entrance exam?" The teacher looked past me.

"You'll be happy at the elementary school, along with all your friends here," a sweeping movement of her arm accompanying her outrageous statement. After school I rushed home to tell my parents the ghastly news. They did not appear surprised.

"Your teacher suggested," they explained, "that since you have difficulties with arithmetic you would be happier in the elementary school where you won't have to make such an effort. But since you might well pass the entrance examination to the grammar school, it was thought advisable not to let you sit for it in the first place."

What my parents did not know was that because ours was a particularly large year, grammar school places were at a premium as there were not enough grammar school teachers available for two classes. The scholastically less gifted girls had been told weeks earlier that since they stood no chance of passing the entrance examination, there was no point in sitting for it, but there were still too many applicants, so a way had to be found to further reduce their number. I felt that I had been let down by my parents who had fallen for the teacher's ruse, and that I had been cheated by my teacher. I was not actively unhappy, merely resentful, at the elementary school, and carried an outsize chip on my shoulder for many years -- until I entered university, eleven years later, with a grant from the British government. Most of the time I did the minimum of work I felt I could safely get away with since there seemed no point in exerting myself in the elementary school. Occasionally, I made an effort with excellent results in order to prove to my elders and betters what an injustice they had done to me. My very nice form-master confided to my parents that he was unable to make me out, that my work see-sawed from first-rate to beneath all criticism. My ambition to become a physical training teacher originated in that period; it may have been a subtle form

of revenge on my parents who tended to look down on such unacademic school subjects as singing, drawing and especially gymnastics. A little balm for my wounded pride was thus provided by the deviation from the usual practice of starting English in the second year only. For once, the better pupils -- read: those that ought to have been in the grammar school -- were started on English right away and were taught by a grammar school teacher.

The twice weekly gym lessons were the highlight of the week. Teacher Ruth was young, enthusiastic and encouraging. She was the only teacher to be called by her first name and almost the only one without discipline problems. She was to have represented Germany at the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin, but one of her parents being Jewish had disqualified her, and she was only permitted to appear as part of a group. The teacher whom I really disliked taught needlework. She had already been a teacher in Mama's time, but she had aged neither gracefully nor wisely, for she dyed her hair jet-black and painted her nails blood-red -- an obvious case of over-ripe mutton dressing up as frisky lamb. And worse still, while we had to hand-stitch endless seams she read us deadly dull love stories, silly, romantic bosh. Unwittingly, she helped me to extra gym lessons. Once I had found out that she was a fresh-air fiend, I frequently developed a headache in the needlework lesson: "Fresh air is a certain cure for a headache," she tried to convince me. "Go down to the yard, and never mind the cold, breathe in deeply." I tried not to appear too eager. At the other end of the school-yard was the gym. Teacher Ruth never appeared the least bit surprised at my putting in an appearance at unusual times and asked no questions; I simply joined the class whose lesson it happened to be and forgot everything else while vaulting over the horse or swinging on the double bars. Apparatus work was my favourite. It was exhilarating to feel complete mastery over one's limbs, and the sensation of flying through the air was sheer delight.

On coming home from school one lunchtime Mama told me that the Jewish Community Office had offered her a domestic help.

"Miss Dehn is trying to get to American on a domestic servant visa, but as she has never worked in a household, I was asked to employ her for a couple of months and then write her a reference."

"A lot of use she is," Oma complained, "a hindrance rather than a help, she doesn't know which end to hold a paring knife, never mind peel a potato. Very kind indeed of the Community official to palm her off on us, as though we were short of problems." Mama tried to soothe Oma's ruffled feathers:

"Being a violinist by profession, she has delicate hands. You know, even if she only does the family mending, it'll be a help." Oma reluctantly agreed to give Miss Dehn a chance. She mused, "Dehn, Dehn, we had some relatives called Dehn. They were quite irreligious and we lost all contact with them."

Miss Dehn proved to be Oma's second cousin. Her grandfather, a brother of Oma's grandfather, had changed his name from Heinrich Raphael Hirsch to Harry Raff, the family assimilated and only Hitler forcibly reminded them of their Jewish blood. We felt sorry for such people. We ourselves were conscious Jews. Judaism enriched our life enormously with its belief in a personal God, and the observance of His many commandments helped us to be better human beings. We felt proud to belong to the Chosen People -- alas chosen also for extra large doses of suffering -- but that was part of His design which we were too ignorant to fathom. However, these assimilated Jews who knew nothing of their rich heritage, for them, being Jewish was quite meaningless. In their ignorance they may even have believed some of the anti-Jewish propaganda put out by the Nazis. We grew quite fond of gentle Miss Dehn. She invited Beni and myself to her house and treated us to a violin recital. Many years



earlier she had played the violin with an orchestra in Manchester, probably the Hallé. She offered us fruit and chocolate since that was all we were permitted to eat in her non-kosher home. Beni and I thoroughly enjoyed being treated like grown-up, honoured guests. Miss Dehn never became a proficient domestic worker in our household, but she did get to America, and that was the main thing, after all.

To feed a household consisting of eleven people, seven of whom were growing children with correspondingly large appetites, is no mean task at the best of times. Under Nazi law no meat was allowed to be slaughtered according to Jewish ritual law, hence beef, chicken, sausages, in fact, all meat products were excluded from our diet. Fortunately, fish and vegetables were plentiful and not expensive. Mama developed strong biceps through hauling home heavy shopping baskets from near-by Papendamm Market. She was on excellent terms with the stall holders, they served her with a smile and a joke long after most shops had succumbed to Nazi pressure and refused to sell to Jewish customers. Onions and eggs were in short supply. It was rumoured that eggs were being stock-piled for the German army and that onions went into the manufacture of tear-gas -- and that was more than a year before the beginning of the war. Thus, when a notification arrived from the customs that a goose had arrived for us, to be collected from the Free Port, our excitement was intense. What a treat and just in time for Chanukka, the Festival of Lights. The sender was a friend of the family who had immigrated to Belgium several years earlier.

That same afternoon Beni and I were sent to collect our goose. The Free Port was a huge place with long streets and tall buildings. We wandered around for quite some time, trying to find the right building, and we never even saw the water or a boat. We handed over the notification and waited for our precious goose: a greasy, evil smelling, disintegrating parcel was handed to us over the counter. The official looked his regret at our obvious

disappointment. From his jacket pocket he produced a toffee for me. Back home mother advised me not to eat it: "The man may have been genuine, but you never know -- and it's clear as daylight that they purposely delayed in sending us the notification to collect the goose." Mama and Oma slaved over that bird for two days, rubbing its inside with cooking salt, rinsing it under the tap, repeating this process until their hands were red and raw from the icy water, but all to no avail. Nothing could alter the fact that the goose had been dead too long and was unfit for human consumption.

### Chapter 3

Even without a goose Chanukka was a happy festival also that winter of 1938 -- thanks to the nature of the festival and my parents' efforts. Chanukka celebrates the successful revolt of the Jews of Palestine against the might of the Greek Empire. The successor of Alexander the Great was bent on Hellenizing the Jews. They were forced to abandon their religion and any Jew caught observing a religious precept or rite, reading the Bible or teaching his children, was killed forthwith. The Temple in Jerusalem was defiled, idols were placed inside it and pigs slaughtered on the altar. By dint of their unwavering faith in the One God, their courage and self-sacrifice, the Jews succeeded in driving out the vastly superior Greek force and in regaining their independence. In my dreams I was a soldier in the Hasmonean army, fighting the Greek invader alongside Judas Maccabeus, Jonathan and Simon, the sons of Matithyahu the leader. We fought hard to re-establish our political independence and our right to live by God's Law as proud Jews and not as idol-worshipping slaves. How thrilling it must have been, when cleaning out the defiled Temple and ridding it of the Greek idols, to witness the miracle of finding just one little cruze of ritually pure olive oil which, though normally sufficient for one single day, burnt for eight days, until more pure oil was available for the Temple.

My heart quaked, however, when it came to the story of Hanna and her seven sons as told in the Book of the Maccabees. Jews are explicitly forbidden to worship idols and to eat pig meat. The Greeks did everything in their power to force the Jews to transgress these commandments. Success implied the alienation of the Jew from his religion, a denial of his God -- in short, becoming assimilated to the alien, Hellenistic world, thus joining the enemy camp. Surely, death was better than such a fate. Even so, I doubted whether I would have the



strength to emulate Hannah who encouraged her seven sons to allow themselves to be martyred in the most horrific manner, right in front of her eyes, rather than submit to the Greeks, until she herself was finally put to death. Would I be able to see my children killed and not cry out for mercy? Would I not implore my children to bow down to the idols, to swallow the impure meat and thus save their lives? I prayed that I might never be faced by such a dilemma. It was rank heresy of course, but brave Hannah gave me the creeps.

When it came to the actual celebration of Chanukka -- Hebrew for "Dedication" (of the Temple) -- I managed to see only the joyous aspects of the festival. As soon as it was dark, all of us gathered in the living room. Four eight-branched candlesticks were arrayed on the window-sill; the largest one belonged to Papa, the other three to my brothers. Our boarders David and Siegfried had gone home for the holiday. One by one, starting with Papa of course, the blessings were recited. His candelabrum was not lit with candles, but with oil and a wick. One light was kindled on the first night, two on the second, until on the eighth -- to commemorate the miracle of the original cruze of oil which burnt for eight days -- there was a sea of lights. We debated whether it would be wise, this year, to have the lights visible from the street as they ought to be according to custom, we might well have stones thrown through the window; anyhow, we decided to risk it and all went well. After the candles were lit, we all joined hands: Oma, Mama, Papa, we five children and whatever visitors happened to be present, we formed a large circle and walked round the dining table, singing the many stanzas of Ma'oz Tzur, the traditional Chanukka song.

Like so much else in our religion, the kindling of the Chanukka lights is for males only, though there was an exception just once. A few years earlier Jacob had thrown a temper tantrum and I was asked to light the candles in his place. I felt sorry for him, but would not let this golden opportunity pass me by. With joy and pride I recited the two blessings

according to the traditional tune and for a couple of hours I tried to pretend to myself that a girl was of equal importance. After the religious part was completed, we sat down to coffee and honey cake, and if finances permitted, there was a tangerine wrapped in silver paper for each one of us. For at least half an hour after the kindling of the lights no work must be done, not even darning socks was permitted, we all of us sat down at leisure for once. When everything was eaten up, the table was cleared, the cloth removed and the games were fetched out. We played lotto, at the end of which everyone was given a small prize. This was followed by a game of Trendel, in Britain it's usually called Dreidel, the universally recognized game for Chanukka. The trendel is a small top which has one Hebrew letter inscribed on each of its four faces, they are: n -- g -- h -- sh -- which make up the initial letters of "Nes Gadol Haya Sham" -- "A great miracle happened there." In Palestine -- later Israel -- the last letter on the trendel was not sh for sham: "there," but p for the word poh -- "here," since the Chanukka miracle had taken place right here, in the Land of Israel. In former years we played trendel for hazelnuts, but this year we had to make do with white beans, the kind that went into our Sabbath midday bean soup. Then there was the game of Hammer and Bell where one could buy a card with the picture of a bell, a hammer, a horse or a store, from the proceeds of which one could, if lucky, become a Rothschild or, if unlucky, go bankrupt. I never dared bid for the store for fear of bankruptcy even if only in white beans. Was this game a forerunner of Monopoly?

Every now and then our glances strayed to the Chanukka lights and our thoughts turned to their message of the need for faith in God's mercy and His help for those in distress who actively work for their own salvation -- as the Maccabees had done -- and not just passively rely on a miracle. We were taught that God helps those who help themselves.

One Chanukka afternoon when I was ten or eleven years old, the door bell rang while we were assembled in the living room for the kindling of the lights. Mama went to open the door. My form-mistress stepped inside.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Emanuel. How very kind of you to invite me." Mama swallowed hard and tried not to show her amazement.

"We are happy to have you with us, do come right in, you're just in time for lighting."

My teacher's presence turned a lovely Chanukka evening into a perfect one. She charmed the whole family, as I knew she would. I had wanted her to see with her own eyes what a lovely family I had and on Chanukka they were at their happiest best. After our guest had left, Mama called me. I began to stammer an apology. "Listen here, Betty, it was a nice idea to invite your teacher, but please have the kindness to ask me beforehand, this is the second time you've done this sort of thing." She was perfectly right. The first occasion had been on my previous birthday. As far as I could think back there had always been a birthday party, but the previous year, for some reason unknown to me, none was planned. I felt that one was due to me, so I had invited a few of my friends. Mama rose to the occasion. She served up the remainder of the Sabbath cake, prepared a jug of lemonade and even produced the small gifts to be won at games, without which no birthday party worthy of its name is complete.

There had been another occasion when Mama came to my assistance in a truly remarkable manner. This was during my second year at school. I had an arch-enemy. She was a pretty girl with a mop of bright red curls. For some unknown reason she had it in for me. In the middle of a lesson, à propos of nothing, she held up her hand and announced in front of the whole class:



"Please Miss, during break I saw Betty throw her bun down the lavatory and pull the chain -- she does it all the time."

I gasped, open-mouthed. I never got any buns. Buns and milk were distributed to needy girls. I took sandwiches and an apple from home. In fact, Papa sent a cheque with me to school every term for this charity. I was too stricken to speak up in my defence. The teacher chose not to react to the girl's accusation and I hoped with all my heart that she did not believe her. My friends knew the girl for the mischiefmaker that she was. This same little horror brought all her collection of transfers to school one day in order to show it off to us. There was a craze at that time for collecting these rather crude, elaborate, coloured pictures of angels, flower baskets, birds in flight and other romantic likenesses. We were envious all right. I fell in love with a large angel whose bright blue eyes smiled straight into my dark brown ones. I stole it. That afternoon, in the privacy of the dining room I was about to paste it into the scrap-book which held my collection. The angelic eyes gazed mournfully and accusingly into my guilty ones. It was not even a beautiful transfer -- whatever had made me covet it? I ran to Mama and confessed my transgression of the Eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." She looked at me silently and thoughtfully. "Give me the transfer." Wordlessly I handed it over, relieved to be rid of it. Next morning, just as our form-mistress had finished calling the register, there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," she called. Mama stood inside the door, the transfer in her outstretched hand.

"This was outside the door of your class-room," she addressed the teacher, "maybe it belongs to one of your girls?"

"It's mine," the horror squealed, "It's my favourite angel, the one I lost yesterday."

"Thank you so much, Mrs. Emanuel," the teacher smiled at mother.

My mother must have loved me very much to have told what amounted to a falsehood for my sake. When I tried to thank her for having got me out of a terrible fix, all she said was: "Sometimes it's well nigh impossible to withstand temptation. But don't imagine I'd do this for you a second time."

Chanukka and Christmas frequently coincide. A week or so before Christmas part of the Grindelallée, the busy shopping street at the end of our road, turned into an aromatic mini-forest. Fir trees stood to attention in straight rows and according to size, sawn-off trunks fitted into a cross-shaped wooden base. As I walked through these green lanes, I felt sorry for the tiny trees felled in their infancy and I gazed up at the majestic giants which would adorn rich men's homes, the branches ablaze with fairy lights and laden with expensive gifts, while the little trees would bring joy to poor families, rich only in the number of children who would love their trees and appreciate the few lights and the modest gifts it bore. Of course, we had no Christmas tree, big or small. The trees aroused a prickling sensation in me, similar to what I felt very many years later on a visit to India, in the presence of idols and their worshippers inside Hindu temples. It was reverence for the faith of others, mixed with a feeling of pride for my own, more intellectual and rational faith in one invisible, intangible, but omnipotent and omniscient deity -- the only true God.

There was a certain unspoken, childish feeling of rivalry as regards the merits of the Christian festivals and our own Jewish ones. On Christmas the Christian children received expensive presents such as a baby-sized doll with real hair that could be combed and brushed, a doll's pram with shiny chrome mud-guards and a set of a matching pillow and eiderdown, a scooter operated by a foot pedal or even a bicycle -- all of them unattainable dreams of my childhood, while we received very modest gifts such as a ball, a book or a skipping rope on

our Chanukka. But to make up for that, some of our festivals, such as Passover, Tabernacles and Chanukka each lasted for eight whole days.

Christmas Eve, "Nittelnacht" as we called it, had a special flavour also for us, since on that night Jewish men were not supposed to leave home, not even for the nightly Talmud lesson. This prohibition was the result of bitter experience at the hands of Christians who, blaming the Jews for having killed their Christ -- albeit two thousand years ago -- tended to choose Christmas Eve on which to wreak vengeance on any hapless Jew who happened to cross their path. Of course, all this was in the Dark Ages, maybe still at the beginning of the preceding century; nowadays, in twentieth-century Western Europe, people were too civilized for such barbaric and senseless conduct. But the custom of not leaving home continued to be observed. In some houses, on this night, the only one in the whole year, people played cards, an occupation normally frowned upon as a waste of time or worse.

The previous year, our home dressmaker of many years' standing had invited Beni and myself to come and see their Christmas tree a few days after the festival. I had not known that many families light up their trees for twelve nights and thought that our hosts had lit theirs solely for our benefit. Theirs was one of the larger trees and it was a beautiful sight, yet I felt none of the hushed reverence and shyness I had harboured for the unadorned trees in the Grindelallée waiting to be sold. It was a sad and disturbing sight to see the trees a week or two after Christmas discarded next to the dustbins, waiting to be carted away. There they lay, felled in their infancy or prime in order to be decorated and adored, and now they were dying a second, more cruel and final death.

Every winter for as far back as I can remember the whole family spent a deliriously happy evening at the Dom -- but not this year, of course. This annual fun-fair was a veritable children's paradise with its bright lights, exotic smells and the good-natured crowd. There



were the carousels which made one deliciously dizzy, the hall of mirrors which transforms one alternately into a scrawny giant or a pot-bellied midget, horrid caricatures of our normal and familiar selves. Next came a ride on the ghost train at break-neck speed through long, narrow, pitch dark passages -- surely we couldn't avoid crushing into that huge door which suddenly loomed ahead of us -- fortunately there were always two of us in the carriage, pressed close together, sharing the dread of the impending disaster and the enormous relief at the miraculous delivery as the door opened of its own accord in the nick of time and we were safe. But what was this? A devilish spectre made as if to pluck us out of our seats with his skeletal arm and claw-like fingers -- he missed us by a hair's breadth. We rubbed our eyes as our ghostly ride came to a halt and we emerged from the darkness into the bright lights and raucous noises of the fair.

Then there was the sad business of the grown-up dwarfs and the grossly fat lady with her enormous bulges who were unable to make a living except by exhibiting their abnormality to the gaping, carefree and uncaring crowds. It was obscene and shameful and I felt sad for them, yet at the same time impatient with myself for my overdeveloped sensitivity. Why couldn't I simply enjoy myself as all the others appeared to be doing? I didn't feel sorry for the negroes -- or blacks, as they prefer to be called nowadays -- who were on exhibition at the fair; quite the contrary, I envied them for their naturally curly hair -- for I could never do anything with my dead-straight, fly-away, baby hair -- and for their dark complexion; they didn't have to roast themselves in the sun to achieve a tan. It was after a visit to the Dom that I decided to become a black girl. I was ill in bed and had been given a whole bar of chocolate which I decided should be used for my transformation. Of course, I'd go about it gradually so the family wouldn't notice. I started by coating my little finger with chocolate,

intending gradually to cover my whole body -- alas, chocolate tends to get smeared on to the bedclothes, so reluctantly I licked my fingers and remained a pale-face.

\* \* \* \* \*

Back at school after the Chanukka-Christmas holiday, we found it hard to settle down. We felt indifferent to our form-mistress, actively disliked the new English teacher, in fact, lessons were one long bore. Some light relief was therefore called for and it was decided to play a trick on our pleasant physics and chemistry teacher. We would all of us fail to turn up for his next lesson on the pretext that we had somehow misunderstood the timetable. My goody-goody friend Miriam remonstrated:

"That's no way to treat that kind man, he doesn't deserve it and I for one simply refuse to go along with it."

"Oh, come along, Miriam," one of the girls argued, "don't be a spoil-sport." Miriam shook her head. A more aggressive girl threatened:

"Anyone who opts out, acts against the class spirit and will be sent to Coventry."

Miriam was a solidly built girl with a wide expanse of pale forehead and a permanent expression of good will in her mild brown eyes. I admired her for her ability of never getting into hot water and she appeared to like me for the opposite quality. I was in a quandary. Of course I was itching to join the class and play truant, but Miriam was right. My conscience nagged me: How sad our teacher would be, would he understand that it was simply a lark, not personally directed at him? I doubted it. And so I turned up with Miriam, Marianne and another few courageous girls who dared face the contempt of the rest of the girls. The teacher gave an unusually interesting lesson as though he realized our "sacrifice" on his behalf. It

appeared that the other girls had not particularly enjoyed their free period. Oddly enough, they respected us for our independent stand and there were no repercussions, not even from on high for our teacher had not complained of us to the authorities.

One day this good man "disappeared" and from then on another teacher took over his lessons. She was a highly learned elderly spinster. Had she been born a generation later she might well have made a successful career in research instead of being wasted on vainly trying to teach a giggly gaggle of thirteen-year-old geese. Unfortunately, she suffered from a nervous habit of silently repeating the last word of every one of her sentences. During one lesson the devil really got into us and we mouthed the word she repeated along with her. The poor woman blushed and stammered, and we horrid girls derived a cruel joy from her discomfiture. She too proved a sport and did not complain either to the headmaster or of me personally to my parents when she visited them -- it was more than I deserved. After our music teacher had left Germany, her place was taken by a man who made no serious attempt to teach us. He spent the lessons playing the piano and got so carried away by his own playing that he never noticed the thinning ranks until, by the end of the period, he was playing to just a handful of pupils. Shortly before the Day of Atonement he played the music of the Kol Nidrei Prayer, which the composers Ernest Bloch and Max Bruch made known to a wider public in "Sacred Service." As the last, plaintive note died away, there was a hushed silence which I broke:

"Some passages I know differently."

"Really? Would you sing them?"

I did, and the fact that one of his hoydenish pupils actually knew both the words and the music of the whole of this prayer left him open-mouthed with astonishment. My knowledge was not the result of religious fervour nor was it due to any special musical gifts. On the High Holydays Papa led the congregation in several of the important synagogue prayers, one



of which was the Kol Nidrei service on the Eve of the Day of Atonement. He had a very pleasant voice and delivery, pronounced the Hebrew beautifully, and most important, one felt that his prayer came straight from the heart. We had a cantor, but parts of the services were always conducted by knowledgeable male congregants. Papa never relied on his experience of former years, and a week or two before the High Holidays he started practising the prayers in which he would lead the congregation. We children acted as his congregation and sang the responses and that is how I have come to know the words and traditional melodies of many prayers.

We were members of the small Heinrich Barth Synagogue and not of the Great Synagogue. When Oma's relative, Dr. Joseph Carlebach, became the Chief Rabbi of Hamburg, he left our synagogue and asked Papa also to transfer to the Great Synagogue:

"We need more Ba'alei Batim -- learned, well established heads of families -- like you there."

"But you yourself used to be a member of our synagogue," Papa said.

"Yes, but that was before I became Chief Rabbi."

"I haven't become one to this day," Papa retorted with his usual ready wit. Rabbi Carlebach smiled and dropped the subject.

Our synagogue had a wonderful caretaker in Mrs. Tiedemann. She was not Jewish. The early Sabbath morning service which we attended started at six o'clock and ended at half past eight. We children were not expected to turn up for the beginning of the service, but it was not considered nice to come when the service was already well advanced. Mrs. Tiedemann always knew just how far the service had proceeded and whether we had time for a chat with her. On the Festival of the Rejoicing of the Law, the adult congregants distributed sweets and chocolates to the children. We took large paper bags from home to hold our

harvest, however should a child have forgotten to bring a bag or its bottom have dropped out, this was no disaster because Mrs. Tiedemann always had an ample supply of bags on that day.

The Sabbath and festivals were strictly observed in our home. We attended several lengthy synagogue services, consumed numerous festive meals and wore especially nice clothes. There were, however, also many Thou-Shalt-Nots. One must not touch money, ride in a car, on a bicycle, use a pen or pencil, sew or knit, nor must one comb, but merely brush one's hair for fear of pulling out hairs, even inadvertently, and I was not allowed to plait my waist-long braids. Particularly, when a two-day festival was followed by Sabbath, my hair looked an untidy mess. Before the law was passed which forbade Jewish families to employ non-Jewish maids, our Elsa had combed and plaited my hair on these occasions. But we had had to give Elsa notice, to our and her regret. The first time Mrs. Tiedemann saw me on a festival with untidy plaits she remarked: "All dressed up in your Yonteff finery and your hair looking a mess, Betty. I bet your mother didn't see you leave the house." To one not steeped in our particular brand of orthodoxy, the prohibition to comb and plait one's hair on certain days must seem strange -- to put it mildly -- but dear Mrs. Tiedemann took it in her stride, her sense of identification with our synagogue embraced all congregants along with their oddities and foibles. "You come here after your dinner and I'll do your hair." After our meal Mama cut a large wedge of cake as a token of her appreciation for our caretaker, and off I went.

After the tenth of November we were no longer permitted to hold services in our synagogue, even though it had not been demolished like most other houses of prayer, probably because it formed an integral part of a block of flats which was owned by a Danish

national. Its furniture and fittings were later shipped to a synagogue in Stockholm. When we left Hamburg Papa was asked to take one scroll of the Law with us to safety in England.

I do not want to give the impression that the Sabbath and festivals were depressing days, mainly consisting of long synagogue services and things one was forbidden to do. Coming home from school on Friday we were welcomed by mouth-watering cooking and baking smells. Lunch was a simple meal, frequently noodles sprinkled with a mixture of sugar and cinnamon, since there would be a three-course dinner at night. In winter when the days are short and the Sabbath therefore begins early, we were home from synagogue before six o'clock, but in summer it got so late before we sat down to our meal that only the older children stayed up, the younger ones were given something of the Friday night dinner for their supper. After Papa and the children came home from the synagogue, we sang Shalom Aleichem, the traditional hymn welcoming the Sabbath, during which we held hands and sedately walked round the dining table. Then each child, according to seniority, went up to Papa and then to Mama who placed their hands on our heads for the Sabbath blessing. Next came Kiddush, Papa recited verses from the Creation of the World in the Book of Genesis relating to the seventh day, the Sabbath, and made a blessing over a cup of wine. All males present stood up for Kiddush, but we females sat on our chairs because women are not accepted as witnesses -- not even to God's creation of the Seventh Day. After each one of us had drunk a small sip of wine from the Kiddush cup -- guests had a little wine poured into separate glasses -- we left the table for the ritual washing of our hands. We now had to keep silent while Papa recited the blessing over two of Mama's home-baked Hallot, the Sabbath loaves. He cut off a large chunk, which he broke up into pieces, one for each one of us, and only after we had said the blessing for bread and swallowed a bite-sized bit of it, were we allowed to talk.



The meal proper began with meat soup, followed by roast meat, boiled potatoes and gravy, ending with gooseberry or cherry tart in summer and apple tart in winter, along with a scalding glass of tea. From 1933, when it was forbidden to slaughter animals according to Jewish law, a vegetable soup replaced the meat soup and fish or rice with dried champignons the roast; I did not remember the taste of meat. Oma shared out the tart and we children kept a watchful eye on the size of the portion, not because we were still hungry, but for any sign of favouritism, though we knew better than to make any comments at table. Between the different courses we sang the traditional Friday night hymns. Breakfast was a leisurely affair after the lengthy synagogue service. Like Friday evening dinner, it was preceded by the blessings over wine and two Sabbath loaves. The meal itself was not elaborate: buttered slices of Challa and a piece or two of cake, washed down with cups of coffee.

During the hours between breakfast and lunch, a procession of cousins and young friends of the family came to be instructed by Papa. He was happiest when he could impart some of his vast Hebrew and Jewish learning to others, especially to youngsters. I too had such a Shi'ur, together with Jacob, my friend Miriam and another two girls. We learnt to translate the Pentateuch from Hebrew into German along with the popular Hebrew commentary by Rashi, the eleventh-century Jewish-French exegete. Papa displayed considerable patience with the others, but bawled me out when I failed to remember the meaning of a word. One day I could stand it no longer and after the girls had left I complained:

"Papa, how come you're willing to explain things over and over again to Miriam and the others, but if I don't know even one word you get angry at me right away?"

"Being my daughter, I expect you to know," was his cryptic reply. I felt proud, but also apprehensive lest I should not be able to live up to what he expected from a daughter of

his. Before lunch, a cousin of Mama's came with her husband and daughter to visit. Julchen, their only child, was a year younger than I. We played ball, jacks or jumped over a skipping rope while the adults gossiped in Oma's room. Lunch was much the same as Friday night dinner, except that in winter there was bean soup and in summer the meat soup tasted differently from having been kept hot since the beginning of the Sabbath, as no cooking, no even warming-up cooked food, was permitted on the Sabbath. Occasionally, we had fruit soup. Instead of hot potatoes there was potato or green bean salad. The lunch dishes were merely rinsed, and not properly washed up until after the termination of the Sabbath, since they would not be used again that day.

After lunch the adults retired for a nap and we children read, played quietly or visited our friends. Beni and I usually went to Ezra, a religious, Zionist oriented youth movement. Boys and girls formed separate groups, but there were some joint activities as well. Our group consisted of about a dozen girls and our group leader. We spent the afternoon in her home, singing Hebrew songs from the Psalms and the prayer book and also modern Hebrew songs from Palestine. We were told stories from Jewish history and read books of Jewish interest. One of these made a vivid impression on me. It dealt with a Jewish family in medieval Spain, where Jews were faced with the choice of joining the Catholic church and renouncing their Judaism or of having to leave the country. Many Jews submitted to baptism, but secretly continued to practise their Judaism. Such people were called Marranos, Spanish for "swine."

The Church employed informers to ferret out these Marranos, they were tried by the Inquisition, the name given to the ecclesiastical tribunal of the Holy Office, and if found guilty of observing a Jewish law or tradition, they were publicly burnt alive; the last such auto da fé was held in 1765. I cried hot tears over the cruel punishment meted out to these brave and faithful Jews. What a relief to have been born into the enlightened twentieth

century. When our group leader could spare the time we also met on a week-day afternoon when we would crochet a skullcap for a brother or cousin and in summer go on outings or swimming at the local pool -- until Jews were forbidden to enter this and other public places such as cinemas, theatres, skating rinks and the like.

In winter the Sabbath ends early and so supper was eaten after its termination when fresh water could be boiled up for tea. In summer we had a cold supper and tea made with tea essence and water that had been kept warm since the previous day. After Papa and the boys returned from the evening service, there was Havdalah, the ceremony which symbolizes parting from the Sabbath and welcoming the new week. Papa recited a blessing over a glass of wine and over sweet smelling herbs, the silver spice box containing aromatic sticks of cinnamon and cloves was passed round and sniffed by everyone in turn. The youngest girl present held a plaited candle in a silver holder, she tried to hold it as high as possible to ensure getting a tall husband. A little wine was poured into a plate in which father extinguished the candle, and with the hiss of the dying candle the dark, every-day world was with us again. Only males drink Havdalah wine. The ceremony ends with the traditional songs Ha-mavdil and "Gut Woch, gut Woch, a gute Woch" -- "a good week." The new week started with a vengeance -- with the huge pile of dinner and supper dishes to be washed.

The wish for a "good week" had taken on a new poignancy in these hard times. How was Papa supposed to feed and clothe his family when he was forbidden to engage in business? His experience of leading synagogue services proved of practical value at this crucial time for he was appointed cantor at the Marcus Street synagogue at the other end of town. One of us children, it was usually Beni, accompanied him at least for one of the two daily services so that he would not have to walk the long way by himself. We were always relieved when Papa was safely home again, without having been molested on the way.



Some time ago the Nazis had already confiscated Jewish property such as businesses, for example. Now they turned their greedy attention to our personal belongings. We were forbidden to possess either gold or silver, pearls or precious stones, except for a silver watch, one's gold wedding ring, two silver cutlery place settings and some silver items weighing less than one hundred grammes. All the rest had to be handed in at the official pawn shop by a specified date. My parents were obliged to take a taxi because the suitcase weighed a ton. It contained Mama's candlesticks which we had watched her light as far back as we could remember on the eve of every Sabbath and festival, Papa's eight-branched Chanukka candlestick -- it would no longer be lit in memory of the triumph of our ancestors' spirit and courage over the Greek invader of our country. Then there were the silver goblets over which the fruit of the vine was blessed on every Sabbath and festival, the spice box with candle holder which served the beautiful ceremony of seeing out the Sabbath. We still have the little drawer which contained the spices; as it weighed less than 100 grammes, Mama decided to keep it -- not for any practical purpose for it was useless on its own -- merely to spite the Nazis. She took apart the Sabbath bread knife with which Papa cut the Challah, because the silver handle without the blade was light enough to be retained. In England she put the knife together again and we derived a special joy from using it. Years ago Oma had given Gitta and me almost identical, small, but beautifully shaped silver cups to be used on the Seder nights of the festival of Passover. The boys had each been given a silver cup on the occasion of their circumcision. "And I don't see why girls should be discriminated against and not also have a silver cup," she had declared in her forceful way. Now, their small size enabled Gitta and me to keep them. Nearly all the other things, including a good deal of silver cutlery, some of which had been in the family for generations, the gold watch and pieces of jewellery that Papa had given Mama over the years had to go. The tiny gold earrings with little emerald

pendants her father had given her as a little girl Mama flushed down the toilet, the Germans weren't going to have those! They were "paid" for all the valuables handed over, the rate was a princely three Pfennig per gramme. My parents must have felt sad and angry to be robbed of their valuables and to have to part with their beautiful ritual objects in this manner, but they did not seriously bewail their loss: "Of course these things and the memories that attach to them are dear to us, but they are, after all, only inanimate objects. God be praised that all of us have been spared so far."

It was still winter in northern Hamburg, but we already celebrated the advent of spring in our ancient homeland. The fifteenth day of the Jewish month of Shevat marks the New Year of the Trees in Palestine, the Land of Israel, which the Jews who live there celebrate by planting saplings. We enjoyed the custom of eating as many different fruits that grow on trees as possible, fifteen was the number aimed at. We had no garden, but one year Beni and I managed a private tree planting. Oma subscribed to a lending library run by two old ladies. As Oma grew older the walk became too much for her and so Beni or I would change her books; the two ladies knew Oma's taste and chose the books for her. It so happened that Oma asked us to change her books on the New Year of the Trees. As Beni and I walked along the patch of bare earth which fronted the library, we simultaneously hit on the same idea. With a sharp stone we loosened some of the hard, brownish-black, sooty, city soil, planted a twig in the shallow hole we had made and covered it up with the scraped away earth. On each visit we looked at our "tree," but it refused to show any sign of sprouting. "Spring comes later to this part of the world," we consoled ourselves. Our abortive attempt at gardening took place before our form-master had taught us the rudiments of agriculture.

Oma must have suspected us of wanting to read her library books which were, of course, highly unsuitable for us innocents. She therefore hid them. This whetted Beni's

curiosity, and one day when Oma was busy elsewhere, he searched for and found one of the books under the mattress at the bottom of her bed. It annoyed us that Oma did not trust us to obey her request not to read her novels, besides, what was it she so desperately hid from us? The book Beni had found proved a disappointment to me. It was deadly dull, all about some empty-headed adults who had nothing better to do with their time than indulge in stupid little love affairs. Little of it made sense to me, the sole redeeming feature was the fact that the beautiful heroine played a good game of tennis. When it was time to change Oma's books I said with as innocent a voice as I could:

"Wasn't that one about the tennis player a smasher!" Her gasp of horror and anguished "You read that?" tickled my vanity, for she obviously believed me capable of understanding what was far beyond my comprehension; she was too upset to ask how we had got hold of the book. Henceforth, she no longer hid the library books and I was not tempted to read them, though Beni occasionally did -- with no apparent ill effects.

I borrowed books from the Jewish library. Books were my escape from the humdrum sameness or the unpleasant circumstances of everyday life and from the disasters, great and small, that fall to the lot of all of us. There was never enough time to read, so every spare moment was utilized; at night I read under the eiderdown with a torch, and whenever I could, I slipped a book under the elasticated leg of my knickers on my way to the lavatory. When the bulge gave me away and I had to remove the book, my favourite toilet reading were the death announcements in the newspaper which, neatly cut up and speared on a hook, served us for toilet paper. I never knew any of the people involved but my sympathy went out to each black-bordered name whose owner had moved into the mysterious beyond.

For his last birthday Jacob had been given a book which told the story of a boy from Hamburg who visited his aunt in Paris in the year 1789 -- just in time for the French



Revolution. I too rejoiced in the storming of the Bastille, but shuddered as he, along with his aunt, sat on a bench facing the Guillotine and watched the gruesome spectacle of royal heads rolling in the dust. I admired auntie for her ability to knit and watch at one and the same time. Oma had acquired the same knack. As little girls, Oma and her sisters had to knit their own black winter stockings, only on the Sabbath when one is not permitted to knit, were they allowed to read, until they could prove their ability to knit and read simultaneously. Try as I might, I never attained this virtuosity, whenever I did not watch like a lynx I dropped stitches left and right so that a scarf turned into a woollen concertina. It was a clear case of the degeneration, the drop in standards and what have you, of our present generation, a fact frequently brought home to us by our elders and betters. On the whole, I tended to agree with this judgement, though I suspected that a generation that could fight a bitter, bloody war for four long years for no good reason that I could see, which allowed thousands upon thousands of its young men to die a meaningless death in waterlogged trenches and make them kill other youngsters who rotted away in equally sodden trenches because they happened to speak English and not German or the other way round -- had little reason to claim superiority over us. Surely, we'd never do anything half as daft, suicidal and murderous. I disliked reading books which dealt with that war. One of my favourite authors was Johanna Spyri. While I could not really identify with the boy who had felt no qualms watching the bloody spectacle of the French Revolution, I laughed and wept with Heidi, slept in a hay-loft under the stars, wondered if I should like goat's milk and feared that my city bred feet would not allow me to scamper barefoot over sticks and stones along with Peter and Heidi. I dreamt of crossing the Alps on foot and then on the other side of the mountains, I'd suddenly come upon that deep blue lake surrounded by a mass of scarlet flowers, just as Miss Spyri had so vividly described it.

On one of my next visits to the Jewish library the librarian made me a strange offer:

"Choose any book you like."

"But I always borrow two books."

"Not to borrow, to keep."

He made Gitta the same offer. What a strange way to run a lending library, but of course, I jumped at the offer and became the proud owner of "The Pathfinder" by J. Fennimore Cooper. The American Wild West of some two hundred years ago made excellent escape literature. Not long afterwards the library was made to close its doors for ever. So the librarian had known what he was doing when he made his readers presents of the library books.

My brothers had even less time than I for reading. They had to attend the afternoon classes where Papa taught traditional Jewish subjects. The Jewish boys' school offered an excellent Jewish and secular education, however, some of the strictly religious parents wished to augment their sons' Jewish knowledge outside the framework of the school. The mornings Papa spent in providing for his large family and the afternoons in teaching. As a young man he had wanted to study German language and literature and make teaching his profession -- as I already mentioned. However, his father had insisted that he take up a practical career which would not entail a protracted period of study. It was decided that he learn finance. Being a dutiful son and lacking the independent means to train for the profession of his choice, he obeyed his father and went to Halle in Saxonia to learn banking. In his spare time he attended lectures at the local university. His stay in Halle was interrupted by the World War. He was drafted into a Saxonian regiment and sent to the eastern front. After his demobilization he returned to his bank in Halle for a while, then returned to Hamburg for good and earned his living as a senior bank official.

His professional experience, business acumen, confidence-inspiring personality, charm and pleasant appearance soon made him into a successful mortgage broker. The Norddeutsche Bank was in receipt of large sums from the United States to finance major municipal projects. In one of my parents' bookcases was a beautifully illustrated book of Oldenburg with a dedication on the flyleaf expressing the town's gratitude to Papa for his assistance in obtaining a loan. One of the measures adopted by the German minister of finance in the early 1930s, in his efforts to put the German economy on a sounder footing, was to stop foreign funds coming in. This policy put paid to Papa's occupation.

The rise to power of the Nazis at about this time was not a propitious moment for a Jew to start afresh. Papa must therefore have felt relieved that he was able to take over the agencies of his late father-in-law in men's socks, garters, belts and the like which at least enabled him to make a modest living for his large -- and growing -- family. There were seven of us by then: my parents, four children, and Fanny, Papa's eleven-year-old orphaned niece who came to live with my parents six months after their marriage in 1922 and stayed until 1936 when she herself married and moved to Copenhagen. His new occupation was lower on the social and financial scale. The afternoons which he devoted to his favourite occupation, in an honorary capacity, helped to compensate him for his wearisome mornings, spent carrying heavy cases filled with samples to men's shops. The boys liked and respected father, and along with the subject matter, he inculcated in them a love for their heritage which was to help many of them in later life to remain faithful to their tradition under difficult circumstances, often far from home and family.

Now, Papa's many years of love's labour were to be rewarded on a grand scale. Dr. J. H. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the British Empire, administered an Emergency Fund intended to help rabbis and teachers leave Germany and enter Britain. A



secretary to the Chief Rabbi was from Hamburg, had in fact gone to school with father, and two of his sons had been father's students in the afternoon classes until the family emigrated to London. When he heard that Papa was in a concentration camp, he declared: "If there's anyone who deserves to benefit from the Chief Rabbi's Emergency Fund, it's Isskar Emanuel who for so many years has given voluntarily and unstintingly of his time and knowledge to so many Jewish boys in Hamburg." He was as good as his word. However, to procure an entrance permit to Great Britain was a complicated and lengthy business even for the Chief Rabbi's secretary. Aunt Hadassah in London, whose first husband had been a relative of Mama's, acted as his go-between and kept us informed of his progress.

"I don't know what to do," he explained to her. "Our Fund has exhausted its financial resources and much as I would like to help Isskar Emanuel I can only do so if a financial guarantor is found."

"I would love to act as a guarantor myself," Aunt Hadassah said, "but we've just brought my father-in-law and my sister over from Germany and we aren't good for another penny."

Help came from another quarter. Aunt Marthe and Uncle Markus Emanuel, who had moved from Hamburg to Utrecht in Holland a few years earlier, also tried hard to get us out of Germany. Uncle Markus was Papa's cousin. His father had died when he was still a child and his mother was left with six small children to bring up on her own. To make things easier for her, my grandparents brought up young Markus as one of their own. And now the good deed of the fathers was to be visited upon the sons. Uncle Markus offered to supply the financial guarantee demanded for us by the British government to prevent the Jewish refugees from Germany, who were being granted asylum in Britain, from becoming a liability to the British taxpayer. Since on the one hand, a Jew leaving Germany was permitted to leave the

country with no more than 10 German Mark and on the other, Britain was suffering from unemployment and work permits were almost impossible to come by for foreigners, Uncle Markus's offer was no mere theoretical gesture, in fact, he was made to transfer a hundred pounds sterling to Britain.

When, at last, Aunt Hadassah held the envelope containing the precious entry permit in her hands, she visualized the joy and relief of the Emanuel family. In a few moments she would write out a fresh envelope and dispatch the permit to them. Carefully, she slit open the thick official envelope from the Home Office. The permit dropped from her shaking fingers. What was this? Permission was being granted "To Mr. Isskar Emanuel and wife to enter the United Kingdom for a stay not exceeding one year." She picked up the document from the floor. Maybe she hadn't read it properly -- no, there it was, black on white: "For Mr. Isskar Emanuel and wife," no mention was made of the five children. There must be some mistake. She dialled the number of the Chief Rabbinate and asked to be put through to the secretary.

"I've just this minute got the permit from the Home Office."

"Yes, wonderful, isn't it."

"Wonderful?" She nearly exploded. "We'll have to send it back to the Home Office, they forgot the five children."

Silence at the other end, then: "No, they haven't forgotten, it's the best we could do. According to our rules we should really have applied for Mr. Emanuel only, as only he is in immediate danger of his life. The children will have to come on a children's transport."

Aunt Hadassah was as decided and forceful a woman as she was a beautiful one. No, this just wasn't good enough. When she eventually sent off the permit to my parents the five children were included. She rang the secretary once again.

"Yes, Mrs. Lion, what can I do for you now?"

"Nothing, thank you, it's already been done."

"Done, what's been done?"

"The permit now includes the five children."

"I don't know how you did it and I don't want to know, but your action may have the gravest consequences for us."

"I understand your agitation and your concern, that's why I saw to it without your prior knowledge. But did you honestly believe that Isskar and Rosi Emanuel would come to England and leave their children behind, at the mercy of those Nazi fiends? There's no guarantee whatsoever that the children would be included in a children's transport; besides, the next one to leave is bound for Holland, not Britain."

It was only many years later that Aunt Hadassah told us on how thin a thread our lives had hung in the balance. A truly frightening thought. As a grown man Raphael confessed to me that he had never been able to suppress the horrible thought that since Britain had strictly limited the number of entry permits to German Jews, our salvation might well have been at the expense of the lives of five other German Jews. Aunt Hadassah was no longer alive so I told her daughter of Raphael's and now also my misgivings. She assured me that at the stage where our names were added to the permit, it no longer affected the quota of entry permits.





Chapter 4

It was in February 1939, shortly before my fourteenth birthday, that the Permit reached us. Only now did I realize the tension in which I had lived and acknowledged to myself the fear that had gnawed at my heart lest we should not manage to get out of Germany in time - though I did not know what "in time" might imply. Whenever friends or relatives had come to say good-bye to us upon leaving Germany I had felt a pang, not so much of envy as of apprehension as our circle grew smaller around us and we felt more unprotected in our increasing isolation. Now I felt guilty in the presence of people with no emigration on the horizon. It must have been this feeling which made me give my precious paint-box to Julchen who visited us every Sabbath morning with her parents. I was very proud of this paint-box which my painter cousin Fanny had given to me before she married and moved to Copenhagen with her husband.

Eleven-year-old Fanny and her younger three sisters and brother were orphaned when their parents died during an influenza epidemic. The five children were not sent to the local Jewish orphanage, but were distributed among their uncles and aunts in Hamburg. When we children were already grown up, Mama told me:

"It's a miracle Fanny turned out so well for I hadn't a clue how to bring up an eleven-year-old girl. On the occasions when I ought to have been strict, I let her get away with blue murder and at other times I made a fuss over something quite trivial. And of course, I was afraid of being too strict with her for fear she'd think 'My own mother would have understood,' and on the other hand, of not being strict enough and so neglecting to do my duty by her."

I didn't think people still died of influenza, medicine had advanced since those days, but should the worst come to the worst, I knew that we too would not end up at an orphanage, though there were uncles and aunts with whom I should hate to have to make my home.

Fanny was a commercial artist. She had gone to art school and then worked in a large store, drawing fashion leaflets which were dropped into people's letter boxes along with Saturday's newspapers. Of course, all the models Fanny drew had perfect, sylph-like figures and the clothes they modelled looked a dream on them. They were a bargain too, considering how wonderful they looked -- on paper. Many of Hamburg's buxom housewives rushed to the store lest these bargains would all be snapped up by the early birds. Mother chided Fanny, half in earnest, half in jest:

"Fanny, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, tempting these simple souls into buying dresses so unsuited to their age and circumference."

"Quite on the contrary, Aunt Rosi," Fanny countered with a broad smile. "You should see how they admire and preen themselves in front of the full-length mirrors in the gown department. The salesgirls often have a hard time of it not to burst out laughing."

"That's just what I mean, Fanny, you make them look ridiculous."

"No, Aunt Rosi, you've got it all wrong. These women see themselves as they would like to look and thus I give them happiness -- and at a small price at that."

The paint-box was not merely a keep-sake from Fanny who had been like a grown-up sister to us, but was a paint-box such as no other girl in my class possessed. It had three dozen round compartments, each one filled with a disc of paint of a different colour, their exotic names printed underneath: Persian rose, sepia, ochre, jade, mimosa, turquoise, carmine, and so on. There was a special place for paint brushes and small dents inside the lid for



mixing different colours in case thirty-six shades should still prove insufficient. And this magic box, which transported you into a world consisting of all the hues of a limitless fantasy, I wordlessly handed to Julchen -- as an atonement for my coming deliverance from Nazi Germany. Her mother asked me: "Are you sure you don't want to take the paint-box along to England?" Of course I did, but I just shook my head.

It was unusual to receive presents when it was not a festival or one's birthday. I suddenly remembered with shame what I had done on my eighth birthday. I had woken up very early in the morning before anyone else stirred. I crept out of bed and tiptoed from the room without waking any of the other children. Stealthily I made my way along the passage to the dining room where we had our meals on the Sabbath and festivals but was out of bounds for us children except on birthdays when our presents were set out on the small sewing table which normally displayed Mama's collection of cacti and succulents. Our birthday presents were a mixture of practical things and little luxuries. So, mother had managed to finish the blue pullover for me on time -- it was not a surprise for I had tried it on many times during its various stages in order to get the measurements right. Now, with the addition of a pretty white collar and three small mother-of-pearl buttons, it looked truly beautiful. My hand went out automatically to the tiny dolls' pram inside which reposed a miniature doll. Yes, the wheels did turn. I had eyes for nothing else. As silently as I had come I tiptoed back to bed. After breakfast my parents, Oma, Fanny, my brothers and sister ceremoniously conducted me to the dining room. I was serenaded with "Happy Birthday" and led to the sewing table. I felt no joy, no exhilaration, I felt like an undeserving worm, pretending delighted surprise. Here, the whole family had united in causing me happiness and I had cheated them. Never again would I be a Peeping Tom.

Two years ago, on my twelfth birthday, I became Bat-Mitzvah -- I had come of age. Until then, my father had been responsible for me and could be called to account by God for my transgressions, but from now on I alone was responsible for my actions. The thought did not unduly daunt me for girls have few religious obligations. Boys come of age at thirteen -- girls are considered to mature earlier -- from then on boys are obliged to put on phylacteries at the morning prayer, they are counted in to the three-men quorum for Grace After Meals and for the ten-men quorum at synagogue services. Women are exempt from most religious duties where a time factor is involved so as not to be diverted from the all-important duty of looking after their husband and children. My only new obligation would be to observe the six annual fast-days, and that was no great ordeal as I had already discovered on my three pre-Bat-Mitzva try-out fasts.

One of the traditional Bat-Mitzva gifts was a wrist-watch. Two years earlier Fanny had given me an old one of hers which had been spruced up with a leather strap. I frequently opened the back "to see the wheels go round," as a result of which the wheels didn't go round for long. Remembering my childish conduct of two years ago, my parents considered me too irresponsible to be trusted with a new watch, and I was made to wait until the following birthday. I did get the other traditional gifts: a set of Hebrew prayer books for all the year's festivals with a German translation. I also received a Hebrew set of the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses, with various commentaries. The volumes were bound in mahogany coloured, shiny leather. The thick cream coloured pages had brown blotches scattered over them at random, like the hands of old people, and the bottom of the pages were darker, the result of much thumbing. The set had been printed seventy years ago and was therefore about Oma's age. Hebrew is written from right to left and a Hebrew book opens at the opposite end

from books printed in Latin characters. Henceforth, my Sabbath lesson with Papa was greatly enhanced for me because I had my very own volume lying in front of me on the table.

This, my fourteenth birthday, would be the last one in Hamburg. Two years ago, though it had been my Bat-Mitzvah, I had still felt myself to be a child. My parents had explained to me that in the countries of the East girls mature earlier than in the West; it used to be common practice for a girl of twelve to be betrothed and to marry a year or two later, when she would move in with her husband's family. Now, at fourteen I felt adult, but I was grateful not to have to think of marriage for many a year, nor should I fancy living under the constant, watchful eye of a mother-in-law.

Ten days after my birthday is the festival of Purim, which commemorates the story of Queen Esther who saved her people from annihilation in the Persian Empire of King Ahasuerus some two thousand four hundred years ago. It amazed me how a strictly observant Jew like Mordechai could agree to have his niece, whom he adopted when she was left an orphan, marry a non-Jew even if he was the king of the mightiest empire. Nor how Esther was able to observe her religion at court since at Mordechai's behest she had kept her origin a secret? Was he a prophet then, who knew that Esther had attained her exalted position in order to save her people, as he later claimed? It was nice to have one's own fairy tale about a beautiful orphaned maiden who became a queen, and about Haman the king's wicked vizier who came to a bad end. And then there was the king himself, not blessed with an overabundance of intelligence, but who loved lavish parties and ordered one lasting a week at the drop of a hat, during which he showed off his enormous riches: "The couches were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of green and white and shell and onyx marble. And they gave them (the guests) drink in vessels of gold. . . . On the seventh day, when the heart of the King was merry with wine he commanded his seven chamberlains to bring Vashti the queen



before the King with the crown royal to show the peoples and the princes her beauty . . . but the queen Vashti refused to come . . . therefore was the King very wroth, and his anger burned in him." On the advice of his wise men he got rid of the queen for "Vashti the Queen hath not done wrong to the King only, but to all the princes, and to all the peoples, that are in the provinces of the King Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen will come abroad unto all women, to make their husbands contemptible in their eyes." After a while the King appeared to regret this hasty decision for he felt lonely without his queen. "Then said his servants that ministered unto him: 'Let there be sought for the King young virgins fair to look on; and let the King appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the capital . . . and let the maiden that pleaseth the King be queen instead of Vashti.' And the thing pleased the King and he did so."

And that is how Esther came to be queen. Of course, Vashti ought to have obeyed her husband and not make him look a fool in public, yet according to one interpretation the command "to bring Vashti the Queen before the King, with the crown royal to show the peoples and the princes her beauty" meant just that: dressed in the crown royal and in nothing else! If that was so, then Vashti had behaved a great deal better than the King and did not deserve her fate and consequently Esther's rise was the result of an injustice. The King, by the way, appears to have learnt his lesson for at the banquet celebrating his marriage to the new queen no royal decree went forth for Esther to appear before him and his guests -- with or without the crown royal.

Haman, the King's trusted advisor, obtained his royal master's agreement to have all the Jews living in the Persian Empire, young and old, men and women, killed on one day which had been drawn by lots (the meaning of the word Purim), all because Mordechai refused to sink on his knees in his presence. Wily Haman offered to fill the King's coffers

with ten thousand talents of silver -- spoils taken from the Jews of course. Uncle Mordechai charged his niece to go to the King and intercede for her people. Esther demurred:

"Whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the King into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him, that he be put to death, except such to whom the King shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live; But I have not been called to come in unto the King these thirty days." Uncle Mordechai warned Esther not to imagine that she would escape the fate of her co-religionists in the King's palace. Moreover, was it not for just such a time that she had risen to her present position? Esther made her uncle gather together all the Jews of Shushan and they were to fast for her: "Neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I also and my maids will fast in like manner; and so I will go unto the King, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish."

In commemoration, the Fast of Esther was instituted to be observed on the day preceding Purim -- though, fortunately, lasting not three days and nights, but only one. I actually know of a girl who made the experiment. She refused to believe that one could go without food and drink for three days and nights which therefore proves the Bible to be false; she was, however, willing to give it the benefit of a doubt, so she took to her bed for seventy-two hours during which neither food nor drink passed her lips. She survived the experiment and henceforth considered herself shining evidence to the authenticity of the Holy Writ.

I did not really mind that the festival of Purim was preceded by the fast of Esther. Since it falls into late winter or early spring, one is not plagued by thirst, one might suffer from a headache and one's tummy rumbles especially at the normal meal times when it is used to being filled. The fast was a small price to pay for the following day's jollities. Still on the Fast of Esther, shortly before sunset, the whole family set off for the synagogue, on this occasion the female members of the family came along too as the duty of hearing the

Book of Esther read is incumbent also upon women. The men followed the reading from a scroll where the text is written with a quill on parchment, and when rolled up, fitted into a handsome wooden or cardboard tube. It was almost unknown for women to follow the reading from a scroll, we used an ordinary printed Bible or a flimsy booklet which contains the Hebrew text along with a translation and a number of reproductions of old woodcuts depicting scenes from the story of Esther. Since all the congregants, apart from the younger children, had not eaten since the previous day, it was considered a feat if the reader managed to get through the reading in the least possible time, on condition that every single word be clearly pronounced and no traditional tune missed out. Every time the name of the arch-enemy of the Persian Jews, wicked Haman, occurred in the reading, the children made a hellish racket with wooden rattles used only on this occasion. I can't remember us ever having taken one to synagogue for we disliked having the melodious and flowing recital interrupted by raucous rattling -- I wish someone would invent a less barbaric and unmusical way of showing one's appreciation after a concert other than by clapping. Immediately upon getting home we broke our fast on a cup of coffee and fresh bread and butter with herring. An hour or so later we sat down to a cooked meal.

Early the following morning, before breakfast, we all went to the synagogue again for the second, obligatory reading of the Book of Esther. Since many of the congregants had to be at work and obviously still wanted some breakfast, the reading was again a somewhat hurried affair. Before we went home, money was collected for poor people, for it says in the Book of Esther that Purim should be a day "of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions to one another, and gifts to the poor." After breakfast we children took "portions" to friends and relatives, they consisted of at least two kinds of edibles -- usually cake, cheese, chocolate and a bottle of wine -- there's the supposedly true story of the Hamburg Butter Cake that



made the rounds of innumerable families, finally returning, like a homing pigeon, to the family that had bought it in the first place and had sent it on its way. The "portions" were delivered by King Ahasuerus himself, his circumference enlarged by a sofa pillow or two, enveloped in a royal mantle -- our deep-red plush tablecloth; then there was Queen Esther, in a long white dress, probably one of mother's nighties, her old wedding veil and a golden paper crown completing the disguise. Pious Uncle Mordechai wore a black suit with long trousers (father's discarded Sabbath suit) pinned up with an array of safety pins, a venerable long beard stuck to the chin and a black hat pulled down over the forehead. More adventurous and naughty spirits dressed up as wicked and blood-thirsty Haman in long, wide, home-made satin trousers, a cardboard sword girded round the loins. Then there were fancy dresses that had nothing to do with the Purim story as such: little boys and girls were flower sellers à la Liza Doolittle; Little Red Riding Hood was much fancied by the very young since that disguise enabled one to carry the cake and wine in a basket just like the legendary little girl in the fairy tale. When I was four, one of mother's cousins made me a charming Red Riding Hood outfit at her sewing class. I had been immensely proud of it and wore it for a number of years, until its buttons popped open every time I breathed -- for once I was sorry to have grown. It waited a few years for Gitta to grow into and after she too had outgrown it, the costume was worn by younger cousins and friends, but a day or two after Purim it was always returned to us, ready for another youngster next Purim.

On this, our last Purim in Hamburg, I wondered who would wear it next year in England. This year we did not dare go into the street dressed up, that would simply be asking for trouble. We sat down at a much reduced dinner table for the festive meal. Our two boarders had left, David was in Palestine with his parents and Siegfried had gone to Holland on a children's transport. Oma's sister, another regular Purim guest, had joined her children

in New York, and Cousin Fanny was married and lived in Denmark, out of reach of the Nazis. Purim dinner used to be a hilarious meal. Each year Papa composed a play which we performed with gusto, but this year he had been in no mood for such light-hearted frivolity -- our contemporary Haman, whose name also started with the letter H, was still at the height of his power, aided and abetted by many thousands of smaller Hamans. No, this was not the time for merry-making. One went through the motions, the children used their rattles with heart-felt fervour during the reading of the Book of Esther, one sent modest gifts of food, ate a festive meal, the younger children dressed up -- but what gaiety there was felt artificial and sounded hollow. The fast preceding Purim with its special prayers for deliverance from persecution was more meaningful than the day of forced merriment which followed it.

Still, we children did try to provide some light relief. We dressed up eleven-year-old Jacob, pretending he was my friend Vera's younger sister Ellen. He wore a coat I had outgrown some years previously and which was waiting for Gitta to grow into. Jacob's short hair was covered with one of mother's wigs, for like all very orthodox married women she had to cover her own hair; also my grandmothers, aunts and most of my parents' close married female friends wore wigs. In the middle of our Purim dinner the door bell rang. Beni rushed out to open it before any of the adults could move and showed in an unusually shy Ellen who greeted the family with a subdued, barely audible "Good Purim"; she sat herself down on the very edge of the couch, as far away from the table as she could, her head lowered in embarrassment at having intruded at our meal. Kind-hearted Mama tried to make Ellen feel at ease, but her questions and comments merited nothing but an occasional grunt. Finally she rose from the table and offered Ellen a slice of cake. We held our breath -- but no, mother still addressed the shy little girl as "Ellen." It was too much. We exploded with

laughter and were soon joined by the grown-ups after we had explained who Ellen really was. It cleared the heavy atmosphere -- how good it was to laugh!

Unless it was unseasonably cold, Purim heralded the date when I was permitted to change the hateful, long, ribbed stockings that buttoned on to an equally hateful bodice, for knee socks. There were days when I simply could not stand wearing long stockings so on the way to school, once out of sight, I entered the dark entrance of a house, quickly undid the buttons and rolled the stockings down to just below the knee. One could still tell they were really stockings and not knee socks, but it looked a little less sissyish. On the way home from school the process was reversed. Not much escaped mother's watchful eyes and more than once she commented: "I don't know why the insides of your legs above the knees should be so red and chapped, they must hurt you." It was quite true, they burnt like fire, but I just shrugged off the question.

Mama's sensible care of us paid off for we were a remarkably healthy bunch of kids, so that on the rare occasions when we were laid up, we enjoyed being pampered. There was the time when I was presented with bright yellow daffodils which were put next to my bed in my favourite vase of fragile green glass, decorated with a tree and ferns in a darker shade of green. I was proud of my very own flowers and that I was trusted with one of Mama's precious vases. I lay back on my pillow and watched those flowers still in bud slowly unfold in front of my eyes. Once past the rotten-feeling part of the illness it was sheer bliss to read to one's heart's content with no interruptions to run an errand, lay the table, dry the dishes, watch over the little ones, or take them to the park. However, after a couple of days I had got through my library and all other readable books.

"I'm bored," I complained to father when he came to pay me a visit, "there's simply nothing more to read in this house."



"I'll bring you a book you haven't read yet." A minute later he was back, holding a slim, black volume. "These are stories about the beginnings of white settlement in America. I think, Betty, that with a bit of patience you'll manage to read and enjoy them."

"You mean they are about Palefaces and Red Indians? Of course I can read them, I've read tons of them. Thanks ever so much, Papa."

Father stroked my hair and left the room, an enigmatic smile on his face. I picked up the book; it looked and smelled just like all of the other dull looking volumes such as commentaries to the Bible, books of Jewish law and homiletics in father's book case, that must be the reason I'd never noticed this one before. Eagerly I opened it, looking forward to a good read. Surely, Papa had played a joke on me. The outside had not belied the inside of the black volume -- small Hebrew letters stared me in the face. I looked closer, how odd, the letters did not seem to form Hebrew words. Laboriously I started reading with my lips, like a first-former, and slowly it dawned on me that this was indeed a story about the early days in the Wild West, except that the German words had been transliterated into Hebrew characters. The stories were exciting and so I persevered, but it took me quite a while to attain some fluency in reading the German text in the Hebrew alphabet.

The second time in my life I was given flowers was two years ago. On the way home from the park, a number of children suddenly pounced upon me and snatched my big, bouncy ball.

"Ours just got run over by a car," they explained laconically.

The children did not think that I would put up any resistance, they weren't even in a hurry to make off with their spoil, but I wasn't going to let them get away with it quite so easily. I rushed at the boy who held my ball, he kicked hard, but not before I'd recovered my property. I came down with a crash and blood streamed down my face. Now, the children

made off like greased lightning -- but without my ball. Mama made me lie down and held cold compresses against the gash just below my left eye. When it stopped bleeding we went to our pediatrician, an efficient, but not over-friendly woman. She examined the wound while I briefly explained how I had come by it.

"I don't think it needs stitching, clips will do."

My mind boggled: stitches? Surely, one didn't sew up people, as we had been taught to darn a hole in our socks, neatly guiding the needle over and under the threads? Clips sounded ominous, but anything was better than looking like a darned sock. Dr. Lewin swiftly disinfected the wound and before I fully realized it, the clips were in place. The sting of the disinfectant had cancelled out the pain of the clips being inserted.

"These are for you, for being such a brave girl."

With these words she took a huge bunch of white lilac from the stone jar on her desk and presented it to me. I buried my nose in the honey-scented petals, proud as Punch, as well as embarrassed at the sign of admiration from this normally so factual and distant woman.

Most medical ministrations were far from pleasant. Mother was a devoted disciple of the efficacy of cold compresses for a variety of ailments. My warm flesh shrank in horror from the close contact with an icy cold, wet cloth being tightly wound round my middle. It was followed by a pale yellow strip of gutta-percha, a waterproof, parchment-like material; a long terry towel completed the process of turning me into a shivering, miserable mummy. A massage with French brandy was the treatment for muscle pain. It seemed odd to use alcohol on the outside of the body; still, the label on the bottle specified "for external use only." Pulled muscles and sprains were massaged with sticky, jet-black Ichthamol ointment. One was supposed to rub until all traces of the ointment had disappeared into the skin. It was a lengthy and wearisome process and a tell-tale patch of grimy skin reminded one of an

almost forgotten pain. That's what happened to Beni. One day he came home from school at an unusually early hour. Mother asked for an explanation.

"The swimming teacher sent me home."

"Why, aren't you feeling well?"

"Oh, I feel okay, it isn't that, you see . . ." Beni prevaricated.

"Well, what is it? Out with it?" Mother was getting impatient.

"Mama, please don't be angry, but the teacher wouldn't let me go into the pool with dirty feet."

"With dirty feet?" mother repeated uncomprehendingly, "Why it's only two days since bath night."

"I know, but remember, you told me to rub Ichthamol into the ankle I twisted, for another few days?"

"Didn't you tell the teacher it wasn't dirt?"

Beni had not -- he hated any kind of sport and such a heaven-sent opportunity to get out of a swimming lesson was not to be missed.

The time our tall and well-grown father arrived home doubled up with pain we got a real fright. Tante Kaatje -- mother's doctor friend -- diagnosed lumbago. The treatment she prescribed sounded amusing, at least to us children: Papa's back was to be ironed, just like a table cloth. We had no electric iron, all the ironing was done with heavy black irons that were heated on the gas range and then carefully lifted up with a thick cotton potholder. Now there was a constant race between the kitchen and my parents' bedroom to get the iron to father's back while it was still hot enough to be effective, though obviously not hot enough to burn his skin, but even so it was a painful treatment.



"That's quite enough, thank you, my back feels much better already," and as another runner turned up with yet another iron: "This is to be the last iron, turn off the gas in the kitchen, I tell you. My back hardly hurts anymore. No more irons. That's an order."

We were in a quandary. Tante Kaatje had prescribed ten minutes of ironing three times a day. This was the first treatment and he'd only had five minutes of it. Dare we disobey father if it was for his own good? His groans as with mother's aid he carefully tried to lower himself to a lying position belied his statement -- and the painful treatment was continued. Then there was the time when father suffered from boils on the nape of his neck, as one healed another one appeared. Tante Kaatje diagnosed a vitamin deficiency and prescribed a daily glass of juice pressed out from raw carrots and several spoonfuls of brewer's yeast.

"But not that dried stuff from the chemist, I want it to be fresh yeast from the brewery."

"But Kaatje," mother sounded puzzled, "there isn't a brewery anywhere that I know of."

"There's one near the docks, in St. Pauli, past the Reeperbahn."

We pricked up our ears, the famous or rather infamous Reeperbahn was the Red Light and amusement centre frequented by sailors from the many foreign boats that docked in Hamburg and by visitors to our city who cared for that sort of thing. We had of course never been anywhere near the place.

"It isn't all that far from Betty's school in the Karolinen Strasse," Tante Kaatje continued, "she could get it once a week after school, it keeps for a while in a cool place."

My parents looked dubious. However, since mother, in particular, swore by her friend's medical knowledge, fresh brewer's yeast it had to be even if it meant sending me to the Reeperbahn. My friend Miriam offered to accompany me and so the two of us set off

together after school the following day. The Reeperbahn proved a disappointment -- at least to me. The cinemas, theatres and other places of amusement were all closed. No dangerous looking characters or drunks prowled along the street; on the contrary, quite a number of smartly, if somewhat loudly dressed and heavily made-up ladies stood in the entrances to shops and the closed cinemas. These women standing about so fearlessly were a reassuring sight for us two girls. Before we ever saw the brewery we smelled it. An overpowering, sickly-sweet stench affronted our nostrils and as we turned a corner we saw heavy dark smoke belching from the tall chimney of a large, square, brick building. We entered by the main entrance. The interior was beautifully panelled, it did not go with the ugly building and horrible smell outside. Had we come to the wrong place?

"Can I help you?"

We spun round. A young lady smiled at us from a glass-fronted cubicle.

"I would like to buy some brewer's yeast, please."

"Have you brought a container?"

I handed over a large jam-jar.

"Sit down on the bench over there, and here's a bottle of beer for each of you."

"Er, no thank you, but we don't drink beer."

"It's malt beer, it contains no alcohol, in fact it's very good for nursing mothers and for growing girls like you."

"Thanks ever so much, but I've only just brought enough money for the yeast."

The receptionist smiled reassuringly. "Oh, no, we don't want any money, all our customers are given a bottle of beer while they wait, it comes with the compliments of the brewery. The only thing is, you are not allowed to take it outside, but have to drink it here."

With these words she opened the bottles for us. It seemed churlish to refuse. Besides, we didn't often meet with such kind treatment from strangers these days. After the first tentative sip, I swirled the tasty, dark brown liquid round inside my mouth and then let it slide down my throat as fast as it would go for fear the jar of yeast would arrive before we'd finished. It did, but the receptionist told us not to hurry. For the next couple of weeks, I went to the brewery once a week, accompanied either by Miriam or by Vera. We saved one of our mid-morning sandwiches to eat with the beer we were given on every single visit. As was only to be expected, the yeast which Papa had to take tasted horrid, like most medicines.

As spring started with knee socks so the winter season began with the hateful long stockings -- and a daily dose of codliver oil. It was administered on a white porcelain medicine spoon, graded with black rings to measure the dose. The five of us stood in line and one by one mother carefully poured the oil onto the back of our tongue and we tried to let it slither straight down without it touching any part of the mouth. To stop us from retching and to take away the oily taste a number of small, round peppermint sweets were laid out in five neat rows, the older you were, the larger the dose of oil and the more numerous the sweets. I had arrived at one tablespoon and five sweets, all of which I popped into my mouth at one go as soon as the oil was down, for they proved to be more effective en masse -- normally I would, of course, have tried to make the supply last as long as possible.

Chilblains on her fingers and toes were Gitta's winter scourge. They turned red, then blue and swelled to twice their natural size. They itched almost unbearably when coming into a warm room from the cold street. When the chilblains broke open, her hands and feet had to be bandaged. To help improve Gitta's poor blood circulation which caused the chilblains, her body was brushed with a hair brush which both tickled and scratched abominably. With



the arrival of spring the chilblains disappeared and her suffering was over until the following winter.

Chapter 5

Passover -- Pessach as it is called in Hebrew -- is exactly four weeks after Purim. It commemorates the Exodus of our ancestors, the Israelites, from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. My parents decided that we would leave Hamburg a week after the end of the festival. It would give them sufficient time to obtain the many official papers required and to have our furniture, household effects, clothes and books packed and shipped ahead of us on a cargo boat. We, ourselves, would travel on the SS Manhattan of the United States Lines because in addition to the normal kitchen it also had a kosher one and Papa knew the Kashrut supervisor personally.

Mother went about with a worried and wistful expression on her face. Oma was not coming with us. It had been beyond even Aunt Hadassah's ingenuity to have also her name added to the entrance permit.

"Oh no, we can't make use of this permit," mother had wailed at the time, "we can't go without you, Mama."

"Rosi," almost gruffly Oma addressed her daughter, "Isskar was released from the concentration camp once, can you be sure he would a second time? Nor will Beni remain under sixteen for much longer." And more gently: "I shall be quite all right at the Old Age Home, and let us look forward with Bitochoun -- with confidence in the Almighty -- to being re-united in a year's time in America. If I get there before you I plan to wait for you in New York at my sister's, Aunt Jeanette, until you arrive from England.

There was an additional reason for fixing our departure for after Pessach. It was an expensive festival, Papa claimed that the Pessach week cost as much in household expenditure as one whole normal month. In England we would be even shorter of money than we were

now. On Passover no bread must be eaten, instead there is Matzah, a large, cracker-like biscuit, which costs a great deal more than bread -- and we were a bread-eating family. Then there were the many festive meals with guests at most of them. Eggs for baking were an expensive item too, for since neither yeast nor baking powder could be used in cakes, eggs were the sole raising agent -- though they would be hard to come by this year.

Practical preparations for Passover began immediately after Purim. The biblical injunction reads: "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; howbeit the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses." But, as was the case with many biblical commandments, the actual text was considered a bare framework, to be covered with bricks and mortar, to be supplied with windows and a roof and a great deal of ornamentation by future generations of master builders: these were the commentators on the Bible and the Oral Law, and the legal experts, until the original, simple structure had been turned into an intricate, baroque palace. Thus, the brief injunction not to eat leavened bread for seven days and to remove all leaven from the house, developed into a four-week grand spring cleaning of the whole house. Our home was always clean and tidy, but by the time the festival arrived, everything sparkled and gleamed, the white lace curtains had been laundered and starched, all wardrobes, cupboards, shelves and drawers had been turned out and covered with new shelf paper, the parquet floor shone like a mirror and the furniture had been given a high gloss with polish and elbow grease.

The post-biblical "interior architects," the rabbis of the early middle ages, had decided that everyday cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery must not be used on Passover since it was not possible to completely remove all traces of leavened food. While this was true of the clay and wooden utensils used in olden times, our metal saucepans, cutlery and porcelain crockery could be cleaned perfectly with hot water and soap. But there the law was and no



rabbi we knew of had so far dared to modernise it. We therefore had a complete set of all kitchen and eating utensils used for only one week every year, the rest of the time it was stored in wooden boxes in the attic.

On the evening prior to the eve of the festival, like all heads of families father searched for chametz -- that is, for leavened food. With a candle to light his way in one hand though the electric light continued to burn -- and the lid of a small box and a bird's feather in the other, he marched from room to room, accompanied by us five children; should he come across any bits of forgotten food or merely crumbs, he would sweep them with the feather into the lid to be burnt the following morning. He never did find anything for we had done our work well. In some families the children distribute little pieces of bread, possibly to test father's thoroughness, but Papa didn't hold with that custom; it was too easy, he thought, to overlook such morsels. The kitchen table formed an enclave. On it was all that would be needed for tomorrow's breakfast. A tablecloth was spread over it. Father, candle in hand, swept past it without so much as a glance in its direction.

The entire family was conscripted for the mammoth task of clearing out the kitchen and then carrying down the Passover things from the attic -- at the termination of the festival this process was reversed. When the kitchen tables and counters were covered with their special wooden boards and the gas stove with a metal sheet, and absolutely everything had been put in its place, the cooking and baking began. The saucepans were huge, for there was always a crowd sitting round the Seder table on the first two evenings, but in spite of their size they weren't as heavy as our everyday ones. "We use them for only one week a year," Mama explained, "and even if Papa and I live long enough to celebrate fifty Passovers, we'll only have used them for just one year, so there's really no need to buy expensive pots and pans for Pessach."

I saw the logic of this argument. Having to have an extra household was expensive enough, it meant two complete extra sets of absolutely everything, just as we had for the rest of the year. Orthodox Jewish homes keep milk and meat separate, thus a pan in which a chicken or meat has been cooked must never contain milk or a milk product. Crockery and cutlery which come into contact with meat must likewise not be used for milk -- household shops do extremely well out of us observant Jews. And the reason for all this is the brief biblical command: "Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk." Here we have another instance of a huge, complicated edifice having been built around a simple and modest structure.

In addition to the festive meals there were the special Passover hazelnut and sponge cakes to be baked. We children gladly helped with those. Our task consisted in stirring the dough while Mama whisked the egg whites on the marble wash-stand in my parents' bedroom; the cold marble was said to help in stiffening the whites. After some ten minutes of strenuous work with the wire whisk, Mama returned to the kitchen, her bowl filled to the top with the stiffly beaten white mass which stood up in peaks like snow-covered Alps. During her absence the dough in the mixing bowl had diminished quite considerably. "I don't know why I bother to bake the cakes," she chided, partly amused, partly annoyed, "when you so obviously prefer the raw dough."

While the womenfolk were busy in the kitchen, the rest of the family set the Seder table. Seder means "order" or "arrangement." The dining table was pulled out to its full length and covered with a white damask cloth. The place of honour, in front of father's place, was given to the large, round Seder dish that held all the ceremonial items required: radishes -- the hors d'oeuvre of ancient times; a dish of strong salt water -- the antiseptic of old -- into which the radishes were dipped, symbolizing the tears shed by the enslaved Israelites; part

of a shank bone from a lamb or an ox, a memorial of the Paschal lamb (though since the rise of the Nazis we had to do without as we weren't permitted to slaughter animals our way); bitter herbs -- grated horseradish and lettuce -- in memory of the bitter lives led by the slaves; Haroset, a paste made of grated apples, dried fruit and nuts, moistened with sweet wine, it was made to look like mortar in commemoration of the storage cities our ancestors were forced to build for the Egyptians. Father added a ladder, made of sticks of cinnamon; and a roasted egg -- reminiscent of the free-will offering that accompanied the Paschal lamb.

To roast the egg, it was carefully placed in the hot ashes of the kitchen range, but when it inadvertantly came into contact with a burning coal, the egg exploded with a loud bang, the still liquid yolk oozed out and a new egg had to be substituted. One of us children discovered that the sound of a spectacle case being snapped shut was identical with that made by an exploding egg. We drove poor Mama frantic with the trick, though each time she was relieved that it was only a trick after all. After the Seder dish had been arranged and put on the table. Oma's and Mama's candlesticks were put at some distance from it; Papa had bought Mama a pair of small, simple, but beautifully shaped candlesticks to replace her silver ones. Each place setting consisted of a Haggadah, the booklet containing the tale of the Exodus from Egypt and related material which is recited and discussed at great length, and of a wine glass or silver cup on a glass plate. Gitta's and my silver cups were almost the only ones on our Seder table that year. To save space on the table, the plates, cutlery and napkins were laid only after the completion of the ceremonial part of the Seder, shortly before midnight. It is said that originally the meal preceded the reading of the Haggadah but that, beginning with the Inquisition by the Catholic Church in twelfth-century Spain, when Jews could only observe their religion in secret, the order was reversed so that the obligatory part of the Seder preceded the meal. Hopefully, by the time the spies of the Inquisition got wind



of the festival, the family would be sitting harmlessly at its dinner, with the spies none the wiser.

Our Seder began around eight o'clock, when the men returned from the synagogue service. Father sat at the head of the long table on his desk chair which had comfortable arm-rests, unlike our straight-backed, leather-upholstered dining chairs, a large pillow inside a white pillowslip was wedged behind his back. Every paterfamilias is a king on Seder night and treated accordingly, though I am sorry to say that his wife is not considered a queen, nor even his royal consort. After the blessing over the wine, the royal master of the house has his hands washed; Beni and I got up from the table to perform this service. For once, this washing is not followed by the usual blessing over bread -- or rather Matzah, it being Passover; the reason given for this unusual practise is to awaken the interest of the children present and to encourage them to ask questions. In a way, the entire Seder is child-oriented. Four different kinds of sons are mentioned in the Bible of whom a great deal is made in the Haggadah; they are: "the Wise, the Wicked, the Simple and He Who Has No Capacity To Enquire."

The wise son has studied and understood all the minutiae of the innumerable laws concerned with the observance of Passover. Beni fitted this description well with his good head and willingness to study Jewish subjects. At mention of the second son I fearfully expected all eyes to turn in my direction -- of course they never did -- but I honestly believed that if anyone in our family was wicked, it was I who found it so difficult to accept that in the last analysis "it is ours not to question but to obey." Only recently, I had decided not to cover my hair with a wig upon marriage since the reason for it was too far-fetched, and besides, I saw no point in covering my hair with some other woman's, possibly more glamorous hair than my own. And if a woman's crowning glory spelled irresistible temptation

to some men, then it was surely up to those lords of creation to control their lust rather than demand that women hide their natural beauty. Of course, Muslim women who have to cover their faces with a black veil and their bodies with a shapeless black garment reaching to their feet are even worse off. In fact, they are their husband's chattel who can be divorced by the husband uttering three times: "I herewith divorce you" -- and he is permitted four wives at one and the same time. Heaven help me if I'd been born a Muslim girl, but I didn't agree to being a second-class citizen in my religion either. I had tried to discuss the subject of the wig with father; he was unable to convince me, and his final retort: "If your husband demands that you wear a wig, a wig you'll jolly well wear," to which my answer was: "But I shan't marry such a husband, it wouldn't be fair to him," did not improve matters. Papa was merely amused, he did not take me seriously. Who was I anyway, to dare question laws which famous sages had laid down in their wisdom over the centuries and which all good Jews, and certainly everyone in my family, took for granted? But question I did, it seemed dishonest not to face up to my doubts, hence, there must be something thoroughly wrong with me.

The third and fourth sons were absent in our family. Father did not hold with the usual explanation that the fourth son was still too young to ask questions, but that he was the same age as the other three. He was not incapable of asking questions, rather completely indifferent to his religion and therefore even worse than the wicked son. Although in my heart of hearts I did not really agree with this interpretation, I was happy not to have to consider myself the very worst of the Four Sons.

In a few terse sentences the Bible tells us how to deal with each of the four sons, but the Haggadah elaborates on this subject: "The wicked son says: 'What is this work to you?' By the expression YOU, it is clear that he does not include himself and since he has excluded himself from the collective body of the nation, he denies a principle of faith. Therefore you

must blunt his teeth by saying: 'This is done because of what the Lord did for ME when I went forth from Egypt'; for had he been there he would not have been thought worthy to be redeemed."

As a very young child I had imagined that "blunting his teeth" meant filing down the long and pointed fangs which a wicked person grows, but when I was a little older I fortunately understood the parable which Papa told us: "A poor man had saved hard and stinted himself for many a long month so as to have enough money with which to buy Matzah and wine for Pessach. One fine spring day, shortly before the festival, he happened to walk past the Men's Outfitters, and there in the window he saw the very suit he'd always dreamt to wear. The colour was just right, the cut was superb and it even looked his size. He opened the shop door, walked in and announced: 'I'd like that suit you've got in the window.'

'Certainly, sir; yes, it's your size and ought to fit you, even if it does not, we've got a tailor on the premises for alterations. Would you like to try it on?'

'No need.' The customer pulled a wad of notes from his pocket. The suit was wrapped up and handed to him across the counter. The man rushed home with his purchase and called to his wife:

'Come quickly and look what I've got. Isn't it beautiful? Just feel the cloth, strong and soft at the same time, look at the shade of pearly grey and look at the finish, perfect, isn't it?'

'It's beautiful dear, but how did you come by it?'

'As I walked along the street the sun made my old suit look more shabby and threadbare than ever, and there a few steps away, in the shop window was the very suit I'd



always dreamt about. So I went in and bought it, and imagine, it cost exactly the amount of money I had in my pocket.'

'But that money was meant for Pessach. What about Matzah and wine, and new clothes and shoes for the children?'

The husband struck his forehead with the palm of his hand. 'Good heavens, I forgot all about Pessach. Of course, you are right. What am I to do now?'

'There's only one thing to do, take the suit back to the shop.' The suit was carefully folded and wrapped up again. The man marched into the shop:

'I want my money back, the suit does not fit.'

Without a word the shopowner opened the till, returned the purchase money and the customer walked out. A friend of the owner who had witnessed this scene burst out:

'Are you mad? What kind of businessman are you? Why didn't you ask the man to try on the suit? You've got a tailor sitting upstairs for the express purpose of making alterations. I really don't understand you.'

'I'm not crazy, and it's you who didn't understand that man. Whatever alteration we'd have made, the suit would never have fitted -- he did not want it to fit.'

We had listened breathlessly to this exciting tale. "And it's the same with the wicked son," father concluded, "you can argue with him till doomsday, it's all quite useless because he does not want to be convinced. Therefore, don't argue, but blunt his teeth by giving him the kind of reply which precludes further argument."

Father had been reclining at his ease against the pillow, now he sat up straight.

"What I'm going to tell you now, you won't find written in the Haggadah, though in a way it has to do with the story of the Exodus." His earnest tone of voice commanded our complete attention.

"Like our ancestors we too are before an exodus, not from Egypt, of course, but from Germany where our family has lived for hundreds of years, longer than many of those who now want to get rid of us. During all that time we have made our contribution to the wellbeing of this land and have been its loyal citizens. We have known good and happy times here too and let's not forget to be grateful for them. The Children of Israel left a country where they had been cruelly treated, they were happy to leave a life of servitude and oppression." He shook his head sadly, "but their gratitude to the Almighty for their redemption was short-lived. They began to complain and to pine for the 'fleshpots of Egypt.' They made unfavourable comparisons between their former lives in luxury-loving Egypt and their present hard and harsh mode of life as desert wanderers." He raised his voice and looked at each one of us children in turn: "Let us decide here and now never to forget to thank God for our own personal exodus and not ever do I want to hear the complaint: 'but in Hamburg . . .'" He lowered his voice. "Now, let's return to the Haggadah."

We had arrived at the enumeration of the Ten Plagues with which God punished the Egyptians because their king, Pharaoh, would not let His people, the Israelites, go. With each plague we dipped our little finger into our full wine glass and shook the drop that adhered to it onto the glass plate. This gesture was meant to teach us not to gloat over the suffering even of our enemies.

On the first Seder night Mama was worn out from the long, hard days of preparation for the festival. Her cheeks grew even more rosy than usual from the warmth of the room and the half glass of wine she had drunk. Her eyes closed, her head sank forward. Papa gently prodded her when we got to the words in the Haggadah: "Pessach, Matzah and Bitter Herbs" which every participant has to utter. Mama came to with a start. "I heard every word, I really did," she indignantly denied having dropped off.

The part of the Seder which deals with the story of the Exodus was nearly over, it ended with another blessing over the wine and a good, long sip. Now we all washed our hands, even Papa got up this time, and that was our opportunity to "steal" the Afikoman, this is half a Matzah of which one eats a little at the conclusion of the meal, after which nothing more must be eaten that night. The younger children, with the help of the bigger ones, hide this precious Afikoman inside its white bag, somewhere where he will never think of looking for it. Papa recited the blessing over Matzah and distributed a small piece to each one of us, according to age, then came the bitter herbs -- a plain lettuce leaf dipped in the sweet Haroset; this was followed by a teaspoonful of grated horseradish placed between two small pieces of Matzah and eaten "just as the Sage Hillel had done during the time the Holy Temple stood"; we children firmly believed Hillel to have been the inventor of the sandwich.

Now dinner proper started. At the end of it, before Grace after Meals, father looked for the Afikoman, which he had carefully placed behind his pillow, and made a great pretence of being amazed at its disappearance. He made no effort to look for it, but came straight to the point. Trying hard to keep a twinkle from his eyes he turned to the least likely culprit and sternly asked Aunt Kaatje's old mother:

"Do you know anything about the missing Afikoman? Without it we cannot continue with the Seder." Smiling, old Mrs. Benninga shook her head. After a few more wrong accusations he turned his stern gaze on Gitta and Raphael who squirmed in their seats with a mixture of guilty excitement and pride for causing all this commotion.

"Surely, you wouldn't do such a terrible thing as to steal the Afikoman?" The two children tried to avoid his accusing eyes. Raphael was all for giving it back there and then and had to be restrained by us.



"It's getting very late for eating the Afikoman, almost midnight, so I'll make you an offer: tell me what you want for its return."

The children had given this long and careful thought and came out pat with their requests: "A dolls' tea-set please," Gitta's slightly slanting green eyes looked adoringly at father. "I'd like a box of building blocks," Raphael's dark blue eyes held an absent-minded look, he was probably designing the mansion he would build with the new bricks. The Afikoman was produced from its hiding place and the Seder continued. Stealing the Afikoman is traditional in many Jewish communities, its purpose is to keep the younger children awake and interested.

Grace after the Meal was followed by the second part of the Seder. This consists of lengthy readings from the Book of Psalms, some of which we sang, with father as the soloist and we his choir. The fourth and last glass of wine was drunk and the Seder came to an end at around two o'clock in the morning with some rousing songs of praise of the Almighty and with the heart-felt prayer said out loud in unison: "Next year in Jerusalem!" It did not look as if we would get there quite so soon, but we were thankful that this was to be our last Passover in Nazi Germany.

Since we were to leave on the eighteenth of April, just one week after Passover, there was no point in returning to school after the holiday for the new term. Often in the past I had tried to imagine the day in some distant future when I'd be freed of the yoke of inflexible timetables, worrisome examinations, being made to sit still and silent by the hour and having every moment of the school day regulated for me, and on top of it all, still have to spend precious time at home on dull homework. But as I made the rounds to say good-bye to my teachers and parted from my class-mates I was unaccountably melancholic and unsettled, and

now, knowing them to be back at school, I felt shut out. In fact, I was already looking forward to going back to school in England.

At the moment, a settled, regular life seemed very remote. Our home was being dismantled. My parents had decided to sell the elegant dining room and their bedroom suite, the carpets and various odds and ends.

"We won't be able to afford the type of accommodation suitable for this type of furniture," they explained. "Besides, their sale will help defray the cost of the transport for the rest of the things." Father sighed deeply. "As it is, it's impossible to budget. Every citizen can claim a reduction in income tax for each of his children, but a law was recently passed according to which not only is there no longer a tax reduction for Jewish children -- you simply do not exist as far as the tax people are concerned -- the new law even stipulates that Jewish families with children are taxed according to 'Group I'; that is to say, according to the highest rate which in the case of non-Jews applies only to unmarried persons. So I'm suddenly and quite unexpectedly faced with having to pay much more tax than I had budgeted for."

The beautiful furniture fetched only a fraction of its value since the buyers were well aware of our situation as Jews about to emigrate; in fact, the new neighbours across the landing kept on postponing paying for ever. I was sorriest that we parted with mother's three-tiered, elegant "what-not" or "etagere" as we called it, which graced a corner of the dining room. It held many charming knick-knacks, such as Dresden figurines, Rosenthal porcelain vases, a set of three heavy brass monkeys one of which covered his ears with his hands, the second one his mouth and the third his eyes -- this was to demonstrate some moral principle of reticence. There was a large pink shell, when pressed to one's ear one was transported to the exciting world of roaring ocean waves. A wine-red set of three Egermann

glasses and a matching little bowl on three tiny feet imparted a sense of tasteful opulence. As a coming-home present from a holiday, several years earlier, I had presented my parents with a small, plain white vase, decorated with a somewhat crude picture of trees and a cottage, which bore the message in thick black print, "Greetings from the Black Forest." Kind-hearted Mama had given it a place of honour on the etagere. I was touched by her gesture, but felt the incongruity of my cheap, little gift -- like a poor relation -- in this exalted company.

"Books take up a lot of room in the container," Paper explained, "so I want you to leave all your German books behind and only take the Hebrew ones and those dealing with Jewish subjects." My heart sank, I would have to part with the few precious books in my possession. Still, if Mama could bear to leave all those beautiful volumes behind, mostly classical novels which I had only recently started to read, one of which father had presented to her on each Sabbath throughout their period of engagement, I could do no less. But at the last moment I smuggled amongst the books to be taken, a few favourites: "The Pathfinder" -- a memento from the Jewish lending library -- I soothed my conscience. I surreptitiously added Waldemar Bonsel's "The Bee Maya and Her Adventures" and the volume of "Geflügelte Worte" -- Winged Words -- a dictionary of quotations that Oma had recently given to me.

"Maybe there's room for my scooter?" Jacob enquired hopefully. The scooter as well as my dolls' pram which had meanwhile been passed down to Gitta, had to stay behind, but since my roller skates took up little room I was permitted to take them. Mama tried to cheer us up:

"We had a letter from Uncle, as you know he and his family left for London a few weeks ago. He strongly advises us not to bring any wardrobes because in England people



hang their clothes on nails in the wall." Mama smiled at our open-mouthed astonishment. "I think we'll disregard this piece of advice and take our wardrobes, what do you think?"

Uncle Markus in Utrecht acted not only as our guarantor vis-à-vis the British government, he performed the same service for his sister, her husband -- the uncle-of-the-nails-in-the-wall -- and their four children, as well as for his brother, sister-in-law and their only child. In order to cut down expenditure we three families were to rent a house together. Our family would have three rooms at its disposal: one for the three boys, one for Gitta and me and a bedroom for our parents which would also serve as our combined dining/sitting room. Our parents had the head- and foot-boards of their two beds sawn off so that they would look like divans in the combination room. It had been decided not to move to London with its large concentration of refugees competing for the few available jobs, nor to go far inland because that would add to the expense of next year's move to the States. The choice had fallen on Cardiff. All we knew about this town was from our geography lessons at school: "A city of some 300,000 inhabitants in the coal-mining area of south-west Britain." Its small Jewish community included a few families from Germany.

The packers arrived. They were accredited by the customs' authorities and were to make sure we smuggled out no valuables and no newly bought furniture nor new clothes not on the approved list. They seemed pleasant enough so I plucked up courage:

"Am I allowed to take out a new camera and a few films? I have eight Marks on my savings account, the cheapest Kodak box costs four Marks and I could buy four films for the rest of the money."

"Run along and get the camera and films and we'll pack them among your things."

"Mama, Papa, the packers said it's okay, so I'm off to the bank and the camera shop."

I rushed out, ran down the stairs and round the corner to the bank in the Grindelallee. With a light heart I withdrew all the money it had taken years of painstaking saving to accumulate. I had recently graduated to ten Pfennig a week pocket money and out of this came birthday presents and an occasional, illicit visit to a sweet shop. I did not really have to buy presents from my own money for father bought birthday presents for us to give to members of the family. This had been fine when I was very young, but nowadays I added a small gift bought from my own money. We were forbidden to accept money gifts so that the only income was our weekly allowance; a further ten Pfennig could be earned for every '1' - the top mark that might grace our three annual school reports and which, at least in my case, did precious little to improve the state of my finances.

"You want to withdraw all your savings?" The bank clerk raised his eyebrows.

"Yes, I'm closing my account. We are off to England."

The clerk handed me eight Mark, made me sign a receipt and wished me all the best for my future. He made me feel like an old and valued customer of his bank. I bought my four-Mark camera and four films. Back at home I handed the precious parcel to one of the packers.

"Look carefully among your undies when you unpack."

He gave me a broad wink and I nodded my grateful comprehension. By the time they left, our apartment was almost empty. The high-ceilinged rooms echoed to our voices; where pictures used to hang the wall papers had retained their original colour, looking brash in comparison with the muted, lived-in shades and patterns. For our last few days and nights in Hamburg we were distributed among various relatives. I stayed with Julchen and her parents. Being an only child, she considered it a treat to have me sleep over and share her bedroom. Beni had recently initiated me into the art of belching and I passed the secret on to an

appreciative Julchen as a parting gift. One takes a deep breath and swallows hard several times, the surprisingly loud belch this produces is worth the slightly sick feeling in the pit of one's stomach. Julchen's mother dampened our high spirits:

"I know that we'll never meet again, we've no hope of leaving Germany, and don't kid yourself that you'll ever see your grandmother again -- in America or anywhere else -- we are all of us doomed." I shrugged my shoulders, refusing to believe any of this, but her prophecy proved correct -- unfortunately.



Chapter 6

The eighteenth of April dawned clear and crisp. The spring sun shone down on us and on the friends and relations who had come to see us off. One of these was Oma's relative, Rabbi Joseph Carlebach. He gave Beni a leather folder with letter paper, and chocolate to the rest of us children, pulled my plaits and kissed Raphael. I had bought a pretty glass bottle with perfume from the druggist on our corner as a good-bye present for Oma. She was visibly touched by my modest gift.

"You can have the bottle refilled when it's empty." Oma nodded, I quickly babbled on so as to get us over this horribly sad and emotional moment of parting, "You really can, I asked the druggist, to make quite sure."

Oma understood that I was trying hard to hold back my tears. She sniffed the perfume and declared: "It's my favourite scent, I shall think of you every time I use it and I'll have it refilled when empty." She opened her handbag, dropped the bottle inside it, snapped the bag shut and with it the emotion-laden atmosphere.

"Passengers only board the coaches according to the class indicated on the ticket," an official announced.

Slowly and automatically we made for the coach marked Third Class, still under the impact of the parting from our dear ones whom we were leaving behind.

"Not this one," Papa said, "that one over there."

"But that says Tourist Class," we argued.

"Do as you are told," he commanded. Puzzled, we got on the tourist class coach. Mother smilingly told us:

"It's Papa's surprise. After we had paid for absolutely everything there was a bit of money left and since we aren't allowed to take more than 10 Mark each out of Germany, we decided to blow it on tourist class tickets. It'll be hard enough once we arrive, so let's enjoy ourselves these three carefree days on board the Manhattan."

A number of passengers gasped. I followed their gaze and looked out of the window. Someone had been run over by a tram.

"Don't look!" Mama yelled at me. I looked away.

"An accident brings luck," one of the passengers declared. What a daft thing to say, I thought, and how heartless. We crossed a large area of the free-port and after three quarters of an hour arrived where the SS Manhattan was berthed. Before going on deck we had to go through customs. In the customs shed we were lined up according to the alphabet. One of the two customs officers started on the passengers whose name began with the letter "A" and the other with "Z." The officer who began on the "A"s was obviously doing his best to make the last moments on German soil as uncomfortable as he could for those Jews who would soon be out of Germany's reach. Viciously he yanked out of the suitcase every carefully folded garment, shook it and dropped it disdainfully on the bench and when the case was empty he scooped up the lot and flung it back into the case with a contemptuous shrug, no doubt deeply disappointed at not having found any forbidden merchandise. With a sullen look on his face he marked the case with a piece of chalk, leaving the distraught passenger to try and repack his case, and turned to his next victim.

He had only got as far as the letter "D" while the officer who'd started at the end of the alphabet had already worked his way up as far as "H." He too search the cases for contraband, feeling round the edges and carefully lifting out a garment or two. He pressed down the contents, closed the case, chalk-marked it and turned to the next passenger. Like

a pendulum our eyes swung from one officer to the other and back again, wishing with all our hearts that the nice one would reach the letter "E" before the horror did. Each one of us had one suitcase, filled almost to bursting; in order to close the cases one of us children had sat on the lid while another snapped the lock shut and turned the key. The clothes in the case would have to last us until the huge, wooden container which had been sent on ahead a few days earlier on a slower cargo boat, arrived in front of the house in Cardiff which still had to be found and rented. We looked up at the queue, the "A"s, "B"s and "C"s were still frantically repacking their cases; it must have been difficult enough at home, but in the confined space on the long, narrow bench and in the fevered excitement of this moment it proved a herculean task. I knew it was nasty, but I hoped the awful officer wouldn't be through with the "D"s for a while yet. Seven pairs of Emanuel eyes were glued to what we all hoped would be "our" officer, we willed him to be quick, quick, quick -- and he was. Turning to Papa, he grumbled:

"No-one's allowed that many cases."

Father explained: "There are seven of us, which makes one case per person."

"Unlock the cases," he bellowed, surreptitiously glancing at his colleague, making sure, I suppose, that he couldn't be accused of being soft with those Jews.

"They are all unlocked," father retorted.

"Open that one," he snapped, pointing at one brown case. He glanced at mother's carefully folded dresses, with layers of tissue paper between the folds to prevent creases; he ran his hands round the sides of the case, then he closed and chalk-marked it. He turned to the next case, which was Gitta's; as she was about to open it, he winked at us and silently drew a chalk mark on it and on the remaining five cases.



With a sigh of relief we lifted up our cases and at a brisk trot made for our goal: the huge, 27,000-ton liner which loomed up in front of our eyes. We climbed up the gangway and father handed our papers to the official who barred our way. He perused them carefully. I held my breath, there couldn't be a last-minute hitch, could there? He beckoned to a young man in a white uniform.

"Show Mr. and Mrs. Emanuel and their family to cabins 22 and 24 on C-Deck," and turning to us: "Leave your cases here, they'll be brought down to your cabin."

As I looked at the long expanse of the spotless white deck, I suddenly realized that the official had addressed us in English -- we were on American territory now and out of reach of the Gestapo. I ran along the deck after the rest of the family to our cabins. These were adjacent, the ladies' cabin, where Mama, Gitta and I were to sleep, had a porthole with a prettily flowered chintz curtain, through it I saw the grey water of the River Elbe flow past.

For dinner that first evening there wasn't a table large enough for the seven of us in the Kosher dining room, so that Beni and I joined an old lady and her two daughters; they came from Suttgart and had travelled all day to get to Hamburg. I thought I was in foreign parts already for I could hardly understand their south-German dialect. After dinner Mama asked me to go to bed with Gitta although normally I stayed up later, but she thought that Gitta might feel uneasy all alone in the strange surroundings. Our cabin was luxuriously furnished. There were three beds, two of them bunkbeds -- I "appropriated" the upper one - - a dressing table with a mirror, a washstand with hot and cold water, special water for cleaning one's teeth, three water glasses, soap and three towels which were changed every day; then there were seven electric light fittings, a ceiling fan, a built-in wardrobe, a leather couch and a deep leather arm-chair. After this detailed inventory we undressed and got into bed. Unbidden, Oma's face appeared before my eyes, at first somewhat blurred, but slowly

every feature and wrinkle took shape. According to our numbers on the waiting list for entry to the United States we should be reunited with her in less than a year. But how could she possibly make all the preparations by herself and undertake the journey all alone? And how was individualistic and highly independent Oma going to like having to share a room with another old lady at the home? She must already miss us like hell and I was ashamed for having felt so happy only a short while ago. Heartrending sobs rent the silence. In the lower bunk Gitta was crying her eyes out:

"I miss Oma, I want Oma here with us."

"Shut up. You're not the only one to miss Oma. And how do you think Mama feels? It must be ten times worse for her and she might come in any moment." The sobbing ceased and everything was quiet again. We listened to the waves and gave ourselves up to the gentle rocking of the boat. The door of our cabin was yanked open and two big boys marched in, gave one look at us and fled with an embarrassed, "so sorry."

For breakfast our family already had a table to itself. The waiter asked us how we wanted our eggs. The scrambled egg and the omelette which some of us had ordered were enormous, no normal person could possibly finish such a plateful; I was glad that I had asked for a boiled egg since that could not consist of more than one egg, after all. It arrived in a large peculiarly shaped egg cup and tasted delicious. When I had finished it, I lifted up the egg cup to make room for the coffee cup and to my amazement found that the bottom of the egg cup contained a second egg; I could not manage another egg, nor could anyone else -- what a shame to let it go to waste when in Hamburg an egg was so hard to come by. There was meat every day: chicken or beef, duck or sausage, and every evening there was also ice-cream. I hoped I wouldn't have to miss out on any of these smashing meals because once we'd left the Elbe and were on the open sea I'd started to feel queasy. Papa advised fresh air,

and so, arm in arm, we marched along our C-deck in the cold and bracing air; this had the desired effect, though I almost succumbed when we passed some poor souls clinging to the railing and retching. Once the sea had calmed down I spent many pleasant hours playing table tennis and shuffle-board.

Since his release from the concentration camp Papa had worn the Iron Cross Third Class -- awarded to men who had served on the front in the Great War -- under his coat lapel as a precautionary measure. Hopefully it would help him if he got picked up by the Gestapo. When we were three miles out at sea he removed the medal from his lapel, held it in the palm of his hand and with a wide, sweeping movement of his arm cast it into the waves, announcing: "Finished with all that!"

After breakfast we all went up on deck, and there we saw the boys who had entered our cabin. They whispered something to the man and woman next to them.

"I am Ephraim Burt and this is my wife," the father introduced himself. "We would like to apologise for John and Michael. I do hope they didn't give you," he smiled at Gitta and me, "too much of a fright."

"Not at all," I mumbled, quite as embarrassed as their sons.

"Their cabin corresponds to yours on the other side of the gangway and that's how they got mixed up."

"We are on our way back from a holiday in Germany," Mrs. Burt explained, "we wanted to show our boys something of continental culture and took them to Tübingen and Heidelberg." She smiled proudly and affectionately at her two handsome and pleasant-looking sons. The two sets of parents moved off along the deck. A visit to Nazi Germany seemed an odd choice for improving the minds of young people; were the English so insular as to be unaware of what was going on in that country?



Over lunch our parents told us that as a young man Mr. Burt had spent some time at German universities.

"The Burts know Cardiff well," Mama enthused, "they say it's not at all as we imagine it to be: bleak and black, with coal mines everywhere. On the contrary, it's a beautiful city with stately buildings and large parks, the mines are in the surrounding valleys."

I was enjoying our meal to the full and tucked in with even more than my usual good appetite. I neither believed in nor practised Papa's dictum: when it tastes best -- stop eating. Maybe that's how he had kept his slim, youthful figure, but then, I had nothing to worry on that score; Mama was the only plump member of the family, she was also relatively the shortest, only reaching father's shoulder.

On waking up the next morning something felt wrong. The noise of the ship-screw was missing and the motion of the waves had almost ceased. What had happened? Then I remembered. Today was the twentieth of April and at midnight we were scheduled to arrive at Le Havre. After breakfast I went up on deck and watched cargo being moved from the hold and lifted ashore by a huge crane. As I looked overboard I saw large planks and patches of oil in the murky water near where we docked.

"That's from the SS Paris which was burnt just before we got here," a bystander informed me.

"How did the Paris come to be burnt?" I wanted to know. But no-one could tell me. Many years later on, looking it up in a newspaper for April twentieth 1939, I found the following report of the incident:

"Luxury Liner Destroyed on Way to New York

Sabotage Suspected in SS Paris Fire at Havre

"One of France's finest luxury liners largely destroyed. The fire started in the ship's bakery. Its door was locked and had to be broken open. The fire raged until this morning in spite of the combined efforts of the entire Havre police, Mobile Guards, and the crew to control it. The Chief of the ship's fire brigade and foreman fell into the hold and died of their injuries. Further damage occurred when owing to the tons of water pumped on board from fire-floats, the vessel developed a heavy list which steadily increased. A few minutes after feverish efforts had succeeded in bringing the last of the art treasures ashore, including a large consignment of gold and jewels valued at 75,000,000 francs, the Paris suddenly heeled over and lay in the mud on her side with the keel showing.

It is reported that two days ago the Surete (the French Scotland Yard) warned the Compagnie Generale Transatlantique and the Ministry of Marine that attempts at sabotage might be made. Guards were doubled and visitors forbidden to go on board . . ."

Our escape from Nazi Germany was no guarantee then of safety from the acts of man's senseless and deadly destructive impulses. I tried to push these disquieting thoughts to the back of my mind and joined my family for an excellent lunch.

"I suggest we go and have a look round Le Havre this afternoon," father announced, "want to come?"

All of us did, of course, we thought it a great idea, but . . .

"The boat won't put out to sea until late tonight," he anticipated our query. "We'll leave right after lunch."

It was a long, weary walk to the home of Le Havre's Communal Rabbi. He was very pleased to see us; however, the visit was rather dull for us children since only our parents and Beni understood French, but I enjoyed being shown round an old synagogue by the Rabbi.

We arrived back on the Manhattan just in time for dinner -- what a carefree life of luxury this was, a pity it would end tomorrow.

Next morning, the twenty-first of April 1939, at 11 a.m. we were due to dock at Southampton. After breakfast we repacked our cases and placed them all by the door of our cabin as we had been told to do, from there they would be taken to the customs shed. I said goodbye to the girls with whom I had played deck games, they were continuing on the Manhattan all the way to New York. The boat was hardly moving though the harbour was not yet in sight. We were waiting for the tug to lead us into the harbour. A tiny boat danced towards us on the waves. It must be out of the skipper's control, I thought, I do hope it won't be rammed by our giant Manhattan. Fortunately our captain noticed the little thing in time, in fact, he was communicating with it -- and then, to my utter amazement, it turned out that this was the tug that was to pilot us into the harbour -- what an indignity! We disembarked right next to our cabins and continued to the huge customs shed. An official turned to us.

"Are these your cases?"

"Yes, one case per person," father replied.

"But there are seven of you, and only six cases."

He was right. One case was missing. It turned out to be Raphael's. In consternation we looked about us, there was no sign of it anywhere.

"I'll run back to the boat, maybe it got left behind."

Father nodded his agreement, then shook his head: "They won't let you back on board once you've disembarked."

"I'll try anyway," I shouted back as I dashed away. An important looking personage in a gorgeous uniform, surely the captain himself? -- stood inside the entrance.



"One of our cases is missing, please may I look for it in our cabins -- C-22 and 24, just there behind you?"

He waved me inside. First I looked in the men's cabin, maybe Raphael had forgotten to bring it to our cabin, but it wasn't there. Then I searched our cabin and found it hidden behind the open door under the sheets that had been stripped off our beds. I was jubilant. "Here it is, see?" I told the captain who smiled broadly, obviously happy too that I'd found the case. I dragged it to the customs shed and the officer marked it with his chalk. Of course everyone was thrilled that Raphael had his case, but my parents still looked upset.

"It's the cabin steward," Mama said sadly. "I could see that he was dissatisfied with the tip I gave him even though I explained our position."

Beni bristled with righteous indignation. "The rotter, that man's a lot better off than us. He's got a good job with full board and lodging thrown in and we've got ten Mark each -- period."

"All's well that ends well," mother calmed us down. But the experience left a nasty taste in our mouths. It brought our state of pauperdom home to us, as well as the realization that we must not expect people to understand, never mind sympathise, with our situation. Silently we made our way out of the customs shed to the waiting boat-train that was to take us to London. We looked for an empty compartment. The station master came to our aid and conducted us to a first class compartment.

"Er, I'm afraid there's a mistake," father remonstrated, "we are not travelling first class, we've only paid for tourist class tickets."

"That's quite all right, sir, just make yourselves comfortable."

What luxury. In Germany all the trains in which I'd ever travelled had sported wooden, slatted benches, these here were plushly upholstered, each passenger was separated

from his neighbour by an arm-rest and there were white, freshly laundered anti-macassars on the headrests, on the walls were view of England and a mirror. A glass sliding door insulated us from the outside world of the corridor, completing the feeling of travelling in a snug, private conveyance of our own. The kindness of the railway official had dispelled our sombre mood. I accompanied one of the little ones who needed to go to the toilet; underneath the knob, which did for a door handle, it said "engaged" -- how very odd, being engaged was the state preceding marriage. I burst out laughing, for if one of us spent an unconscionable time in the W.C., the next applicant would impatiently shout through the door: "Are you getting married in there?" There was another toilet opposite the engaged one which said "free." We returned to our comfortable apartment; in less than three hours we'd be in London. We were eagerly looking forward to meeting Aunt Hadassah at Waterloo Station.

When we got off the train not only Aunt Hadassah awaited us, but also Uncle -- of the nails in the wall -- with one of his sons, as well as a friend of mother's whom she had not seen for many years. We took a taxi to our temporary accommodation consisting of two rooms at 111, Lordship Road, Stamford Hill, N. 16. On the first Sabbath, Gitta and I were invited for all meals by the Chief Rabbi's secretary and his jolly family; he was happy to have succeeded in helping us to get out of Germany. Beni's former English teacher and his family from Hamburg lived nearby.

"He must have got a shock to find out what English really sounds like," was Beni's caustic comment. It was true that though Beni had learnt English for four years, two years more than I, his pronunciation was worse than mine.

On our two Sundays in London we were invited to tea by Aunt Hadassah and Uncle Ludwig. They lived in Sydenham, right at the other end of London. We travelled by underground and by buses, changing at a place with the funny name of Elephant and Castle.

After a lavish tea of sandwiches and cake, we children went to play in the garden with their two children. Peter, a cheeky lad, almost exactly my age, tried to teach me rounders; Rena, nearly sixteen like Beni, was a lovely, warm-hearted and generous girl. How English one can become in just a few years -- her German had already acquired an English accent which sounded charming. She showed me her school uniform of which she was very proud. It consisted of a navy pinafore dress, called a gymslip though it's worn for all lessons except gym, a white, long-sleeved blouse, a navy V-necked pullover, a navy blazer with the school crest embroidered on the pocket, a man's striped tie and a broad-brimmed felt hat with a striped ribbon round the crown, in the same colours as the tie. If pupils are spotted by a teacher on the way to or from school minus a piece of their uniform, they are in trouble. I hoped I wouldn't have to wear such a get-up for school -- in any event, we had no money to buy new clothes. Rena made me a present of a tennis racket. Before we left, Raphael had a request:

"Aunt Hadassah, could I please take home one lump of sugar?"

"Of course, several, if you like."

"And do you think you could let me have a slice of lemon?"

"I think I could. But tell me, Raphael, what do you want it for?"

"I want to make lemonade."

Peter gave several pennies to each of us children. All the money he happened to have in his pocket. The coins were huge, much bigger than German ones. The happy hours spent in this settled and solidly comfortable home where every member of the family took it for granted that life would continue on this even keel, felt like an existence in a world we had lost. I tried not to feel envious, but grateful. Hadn't we just escaped the clutches of the Nazis? Hallelujah! Which is Hebrew for Praise be to God.



On the first of May, Papa, Uncle and one of his sons left for Cardiff in order to rent a house and await the arrival of our furniture; two days later mother and we five children followed. This time the English train was already an old friend. The third class -- there is no second class -- was quite as comfortable with upholstered seats, pictures and a mirror as the first class. I wondered why people bothered to fork out so much money for a first class ticket. We travelled through beautiful country where sleek cows grazed in lush meadows; we also passed through several towns, the houses near the railway tracks had long, narrow gardens that stretched almost all the way down to the railway embankment. On account of our cases we took a taxi from the station to our new home for a year at 35, Claude Road. It was a three-storey, solid, yet friendly looking house with a small front garden. Our school book, "Every-Day Life in England," had not exaggerated: all the houses looked alike, but in front of no. 35 stood a huge lorry, two removal men were carrying the last of our furniture into the house. A broadly beaming Papa waved us inside. Uncle, Aunt and their four children were already there, while the third family, Uncle Chaim, Aunt Doni and their daughter, Bella, were due to arrive in another few days. In the large downstairs front room -- "Our dining room" as Uncle proudly called it -- a long table was laid for tea for the lot of us. There were two large cakes, several thermos flasks with hot coffee, a big milk jug and a sugar bowl, all set out with flowered china on a white table cloth. What a welcome! Who was this good fairy?

"It's Mrs. Stern," Aunt enlightened us, "the Sterns came to Cardiff about a year ago from the town in Germany where I was born. They are an exceptionally kind, helpful and generous family."

I could well believe it. After tea we trooped upstairs to have a look at our part of the house. Uncle and Aunt had insisted on occupying the entire ground floor and one bedroom on the first half-landing for their boys, so we got a makeshift kitchen, a bathroom and the

parents' bedroom cum dining room on the next floor, while we children had our rooms under the roof. We sprinted right to the top. The three boys shared the larger room facing the street, while Gitta and I had a room to the back with a lovely sloping ceiling. I looked out of the window. It looked down onto a large garden, which seemed that it must belong to our house.

We raced downstairs and along the passage. There we stopped short. This was Uncle and Aunt's kitchen. We knocked at the door and quickly walked through the room and out by the back door into the garden. We heard a door being slammed behind us.

"Oh dear," Gitta sighed, "I don't think they like us to walk through their kitchen, but the garden's beautiful. Look at the lilac tree. And there's a tiny pond here by the bushes."

I had eyes only for the lilac tree. It took me back to the episode of the ball, the cut under the eye and the consequent visit to the doctor. The scar still showed.

"Betty, Gitta, " Mama called, "come upstairs, please."

We walked back through the kitchen, no-one spoke to us or even so much as glanced in our direction. We felt ill at ease. Mama was preparing supper for the three little ones, she asked me to put sheets on their beds. Soon I too went to bed. How good it felt to sleep in one's own bed with clean sheets. Our room was tiny, the sloping ceiling gave it a cosy look which was still increased by the wicker table and two matching wicker armchairs which Aunt Kaatje, Mama's doctor friend, had given my parents for their wedding. In Hamburg the set used to stand in the entrance hall.

"I've discovered where that sickening smell came from," Mama told us over breakfast early the following morning. "When I went into the kitchen, I got the fright of my life, two cats jumped out from the built-in wall cupboard."

"Nothing compared to the fright you must have given those two pussies," Beni grinned from one ear to the other.

"And aren't you happy they weren't mice?" Jacob asked, tongue in cheek.

Mother had an unreasoning fear of those little rodents. She was not amused. "At least mice don't produce such a disgusting stench. That cupboard was filthy with cat dirt, I was nearly sick cleaning it out."

"It's no wonder the house is so dirty," father explained, "I was told that it stood empty with a 'To Let' sign for two years. That's why the rent is comparatively cheap. It's really too large for one family without servants. Actually, it was sub-divided some time ago, our kitchen used to be a bedroom. But why clean everything on your own," he continued, giving me a meaningful look, "when there's a big girl in the house. I'm sure Betty'll be only too happy to help all she can. After breakfast I'll go and register the three little ones at Marlborough Road School. Mrs. Stern said it's the best elementary school around here."

"And I? Aren't I going back to school?"

"Didn't you hear what I just said?" Father sounded pained. "I thought I made it perfectly clear that you're to help your mother."

"Once the house is clean and we are more settled, we'll see what's to be done about a school for you." Mama tried to cheer me up. "After washing up the breakfast dishes you could start unpacking all yours and Gitta's clothes."

I started with Gitta's dresses, most of them used to be mine and handling them took me back to my childhood. Shoes were not passed down, even if they were still in good condition when outgrown, because everyone has a different tread which shapes the shoes. When I had put all Gitta's things away I started on my underwear, carefully lifting out every garment; I had already found my four films, but there was no sign of the camera. After the last garment had been stowed away, the awful truth dawned on me: there was no camera. I



rushed to the boys' room where mother and Beni had just finished putting the boys' clothes inside the chest of drawers.

"The camera's not there," I burst in, "you didn't find it amongst the boys' things, did you? Those nice packers said I'd find it amongst my underwear, but I didn't."

"Those 'nice' packers of yours stole Papa's new shirts though for some odd reason they left the loose collars behind so that they have no matching collars, but that's cold comfort since Papa can't wear collars without shirts."

Later on it transpired that also my beloved roller-skates were missing as well as mother's beautiful Chinese box inlaid with mother-of-pearl which had contained all her sewing and mending materials.

Shortly before twelve o'clock I was sent to collect the little ones from school for their lunch break. Our next-door neighbour stopped me at the garden gate. "You are Betty, aren't you? I heard your mum call you up from the garden last night, that's how I come to know your name." Once again I was grateful to my English teacher whose lessons enabled me to converse with our neighbour.

"Please don't feel shy to ask for anything you may need."

"It's very kind of you Mrs. . . .?"

"Nicholson," she said with a smile, "maybe you need steps?"

"Steps?" I repeated, not believing my ears. Our teacher never told us that in England there are houses that have no steps built into the staircase.

"It's very kind of you, Mrs. Nicholson, but our house has steps that lead upstairs."

Now it was her turn to look at me uncomprehendingly. "I mean steps for hanging up your curtains."

I felt embarrassed at my obtuseness. "Thank you very much, but we do have a ladder," and off I ran across the road. The school was not difficult to find and as there was no main road to cross the children should be able to make their own way in a few days' time. I was early and waited outside the large school yard, staring through the iron railings at a two-storey red brick building with a little tower and a smaller, more homely looking single-storey one; this was the infant school which Raphael attended. Marlborough Road School looked a pleasant, modern place. Would this be my school one day too? Would I find it very strange to attend a Christian school? Was my last school report really good enough? The deep silence was shattered by the clanging of the school bell. Boys and girls of all sizes and all wearing different clothes, not school uniform, I noticed with relief, poured from the two buildings. Soon I spied Jacob and Gitta and waved to them; they waved back and walked sedately towards me, but once Raphael had seen me he broke into a run. It had been a bewildering morning for them. Jacob already knew some English from school back in Hamburg, but the two little ones did not. Everyone had been kind to them and they were quite willing to return to school after a quick lunch at home. Jacob and Gitta soon began to get the hang of things.

"First thing is Assembly in the entrance hall," Gitta told us.

"And that's also where we have P.T.," Jacob added.

"What, no separate gym?" I was disappointed.

"No," Jacob continued, "and the gym lessons are rather dull, though sometimes we have them in the yard and then we play rounders, a bit like Peter taught you."

"But Assembly's nice," Gitta said. "Miss Jenkins, that's the headmistress, tells us something and then we sing really beautiful songs, my favourite starts: 'Who is on the Lord's side, Who is our king, something, something, something,' and then all the children go to their classrooms. Miss Thomas, my teacher's lovely, she's young and very pretty."

Jacob, too, liked his teacher. To the question: "And what did you do in school today?" Raphael's answer was invariably a bored: "Teacher wrote on the blackboard." For six-year-old Raphael school was a new experience. In Germany school starts at the age of six, but in Britain children began infant school at five, so that apart from not knowing the language, he suffered the added indignity of being in a class with five-year-old titches.

My parents decided that after Whitsun-Pentecost -- these two festivals roughly coincide -- I too would go to Marlborough Road School. Pentecost or Shavuot (weeks) as it's called in Hebrew, has several names: "The Feast of Weeks" because one counts every day for seven weeks from Passover to Pentecost, which is the Day of the Giving of the Holy Law -- the Torah -- on Mount Sinai, and the "Festival of the First Fruits"; just as Passover is the time of the barley harvest in Palestine, so Pentecost marks the beginning of the wheat harvest. The synagogue is decorated with greenery and flowers and the Book of Ruth is read during the synagogue service, which mentions the barley and the wheat harvests.

How were we going to celebrate this our first festival in Britain? Very much the same as in Hamburg, it turned out. After the evening service at Windsor Place Synagogue we sat down to a festive meal of vegetable soup, fish with potatoes and a salad, followed by the traditional Pentecost dessert of cheese cake. The punishment threatened by forgetting to count one of the days between the two festivals is "no cheese cake on Shavuot," but I've never seen it actually carried out, for to deprive one member of the family would surely have made the cake stick in the throats of the rest of us. I wondered, would Oma have a piece of cheese cake this year? She wrote such brave letters, but reading in between the lines one sensed her unhappiness. She did not care for the woman with whom she shared the room, who was afraid of fresh air while Oma could not sleep with closed windows. Father's heavy hand lightly stroking my hair roused me from my brooding.



"Soon you won't have time to sit around and moon, all your time will be taken up by school and after school by helping Mama; in fact, it wouldn't be a bad idea to go to the kitchen now and help her with dinner. I got fresh peas and carrots in Clifton Street where things are cheaper than around here -- and I bought a treat for Friday night dinner."

He wouldn't divulge what the treat was. It turned out to be a large tin of sliced pineapples. I had never tasted anything so delicious, and the following Friday evening we had tinned peaches for dessert. There is the belief that money spent for the Sabbath is returned to one, it being meritorious to honour the Sabbath by making it as festive as possible; still, to indulge in the unheard-of luxury of tinned peaches and pineapples looked like exploiting God's willingness at reimbursement and that wasn't a bit like my modest, undemanding parents. However, this apparent extravagance, imported from the British colonies, turned out to be quite inexpensive. Another welcome addition to our menu was tinned salmon of which there were three grades: No. 1, the most expensive, pink and delicate, did not come our way, but no. 3, rougher and cheaper, Mama made into fried rissoles which tasted great with mashed potatoes that were enriched with milk and a dollop of butter. We ate meat several times a week. To my surprise I had not really forgotten the taste even after six years of enforced abstention. For the first time in her life Mama had to kosher the meat -- that is, soak it in a bucket of cold water for half an hour, then leave it lying on a sloping board or cake rack for one hour, covered in coarse cooking salt, and finally rinse the meat under running water -- all this in order to draw out the blood which Jews are forbidden to eat in any form whatsoever. In Hamburg the Rabbinate had obliged the Jewish butchers to sell their meat -- that is before the Nazis came to power -- only after it had undergone this process of koshering. I had to admit that the subject of koshering meat in my religion classes in Hamburg, which had seemed purely academic at the time, did have its practical use after all.

Our parents encouraged us to read and to study, "for unlike most other possessions, no-one can take away what you have learnt, it's your best and safest investment."

Well, here I was about to become a pupil at Marlborough Road Girls School, not so much from thirst for further doses of arithmetic as in order to find out for myself what an English school was like. Having spent weeks at home, helping my mother out with the housework, I felt a stick-in-the-mud and out of the mainstream of life. School should offer me the challenge which I craved.





Chapter 7

Gitta was right, Assembly was a pleasant start to the school day. One of the teachers sat at the piano and accompanied the pupils in their melodious singing. And like Gitta, I could not make out the words which followed the opening of the hymn "Who is on the Lord's Side, who is our King." It was quite all right for me to sing along with the other children since we believed in the same God, but when it came to "Jesus Loves Me," I kept quiet. Next, Miss Jenkins, the white-haired, apple-cheeked headmistress addressed the Assembly:

"Girls, I would like us all to extend a warm welcome to the new pupils who have recently joined our school. They have come to us from Germany where they have been cruelly persecuted. Let us try our best to make them forget their suffering."

What a coincidence that Miss Jenkins made this appeal on my very first day at school. After another hymn the pupils quietly dispersed to their classrooms. There were nineteen of us fourteen-year-old girls in Form III. I understood them well enough when they spoke directly to me, but when they gabbled away among themselves their sing-song sounded like Double-Dutch. Lessons were less demanding than at my school in Hamburg and there was next to no homework. The atmosphere was happy and relaxed, without tension between teachers and pupils. I tried to do well in my lessons, I owed it to the school for it was kind of Miss Jenkins to have admitted me in the middle of term -- to be precise, just one month before the end of the school year. I also felt obliged to show that we weren't outlandish barbarians nor monkeys escaped from a zoo, though Miss Jenkins quite unwittingly made me feel like one. Whenever some important personage visited the school I was called out of class and introduced to the visitor who was invariably astounded that I could speak the King's

English -- after a fashion. In class I kept a tight rein on myself lest some cheeky remark escape me. I heeded my mother's warning:

"Watch that tongue of yours, for if you cheek your teachers they won't think: 'that Betty's an impudent baggage,' your poor conduct will reflect badly on all of us Jewish refugees."

So I sat quiet as a mouse, hardly daring to open my mouth -- it was an awful strain. The end-of-term report was fantastic, far better than any I'd ever had back in Hamburg and far, far better than I deserved, even in mathematics I got nine out of ten. Only Miss Davies, the geography and music teacher, tall and thin with a sardonic smile, had given me a more realistic twelve out of twenty in geography. I respected Miss Davies and was grateful to her for I had not worked hard in order to be presented on a silver platter with the gift of a quite undeservedly first-class report; somehow, it offended me though I realized how kindly it was meant. At least Papa would be pleased with the "Excellents" in Conduct, Industry, Regularity and Punctuality -- which I thought I had actually deserved.

That summer of 1939 was beautiful and we made the most of our garden. Shrubs and flowers which we had never seen before flowered in profusion. Gitta spent hours there playing school, she acted her beloved Miss Thomas and was for ever telling off an imaginary wayward pupil; her strident "Molly! Molly!" must have echoed a long way down Claude Road. On a burning hot Sunday as we sat at our midday meal Raphael proudly announced:

"Did you know there's a frog in our garden? I caught it near the little pond and so it won't run away I tied it to a bush."

"It'll die out of the water in the sun," I remonstrated.

"No it won't, 'cause I'll untie it right after we finish eating."

We had only just started on the soup and I feared that by the end of the meal the poor little thing would be dehydrated; therefore after I had collected the empty plates and taken them to the kitchen, I slipped downstairs and out into the garden. My absence from the table would pass unnoticed for I usually helped Mama to serve up the meals. A bright green frog crouched in the grass by the miniature pond and stared at me out of unblinking, bulging eyes. I grasped him firmly round the middle and turned him on to his back; Raphael had made a thorough job, the string was securely tied round the animal's glistening and extremely slippery tummy. The frog either knew what was good for him or he was too frightened to move or kick. He lay motionless in the palm of my left hand as with my right I set about loosening and then untying the several knots. In a few big jumps he bounded away to freedom and I ran back upstairs and washed my hands thoroughly. Only now I experienced a horrible sensation in my fingers, a delayed reaction from having handled the slimy little body, and for the life of me I could not understand how I had been able to perform my act of mercy. When we had finished Grace After Meals I told Raphael what I had done.

"But I wanted to play with it -- you horrid spoil-sport."

"It wouldn't be much fun, would it, to play with the corpse of a shrivelled-up frog."

Raphael saw the point and forgave me.

"Stop quarrelling," Papa commanded, "clear the table and don't forget to brush the crumbs from the cloth before you fold it, and Betty, you help Mama with the dishes. At four we'll go for a walk."

"Not again to Roath Park," Beni dared to demur, "we've been there on the last three Sunday afternoons."



"Hamburg is famous for her many large parks," Mother intervened, "but I must admit there's nothing to beat Roath Park, the first of the three parts with its huge expanse of grass, perfect for ball games, eh, Jacob?" Jacob nodded his assent, but Beni remonstrated:

"I don't waste my time kicking a silly ball."

"And more's the pity," father got his own in, "a bit of exercise in the fresh air would do you the world of good."

"And the second part," once more mother tried to avert a quarrel, "with the large lake and its lighthouse in memory of Captain Scott's departure from Cardiff for his Antarctic expedition, its beautifully tended flowerbeds . . ."

"The water wasn't all that clean though," I interrupted, "when we went swimming there last week."

"In that case you'd better not go again."

"It wasn't really that bad, Mama." When would I already learn to keep my trap shut?

"If you've quite finished arguing, maybe you'd listen to me for once?" father asked, a deep furrow forming above his nose. "As a matter of fact, I was going to suggest -- before you all interrupted me -- that we walk to the Jewish cemetery" and with a nod in Beni's direction, "where none of you have ever been before."

Father, Uncle and also Aunt had offered their services to the local Jewish Burial Society. Washing and laying out a corpse in accordance with prescribed custom is considered a highly meritorious act, this service they gave on a voluntary and unpaid basis. The members of the Cardiff Burial Society were amazed at the loving care "those refugees" bestowed on the corpses of people mostly unknown to them.

The walk to Highfield Cemetery took us along the familiar route to Roath Park, but after a while we turned off to the left up a steep path which had a notice pointing to the

cemetery. We sat ourselves down on a large expanse of grass, admired the view of the green, rolling hills, unpacked our sandwiches, uncorked the thermos flask and enjoyed our picnic - the proximity of the tombstones, albeit invisible, did not impair our appetite. Highfield Cemetery had belonged to the Earl of Bute and when he made over his estates to the municipality in the 1840s, he stipulated that the Jews of Cardiff be permitted to continue burying their dead there and also continue to cut branches from the trees in Cathays Park, in the centre of the city, to cover their booths for the Festival of Tabernacles.

We had come to love Cardiff and the Welsh people. Mama compared their charm, liveliness and what she considered their slight fecklessness -- in contrast to the serious and solid burghers of Hamburg -- to the easy-going Rhinelanders. Mother always dressed in well made, but inconspicuous clothes as behoved a respectable matron, navy was her favourite colour for dresses, skirts, coats and hats. The first time her eyes lit on elderly ladies, on their way to church, sporting cherry-red hats, her eyebrows rose almost to her hair -- or rather wig -- line. However, after a time the Cardiff air exerted its benign influence on mother's severe taste. She admitted that a dark red hat on white hair was quite becoming, though it went without saying that as far as she herself was concerned, she would stick to navy. On one of our Sunday morning walks someone who seemed to know us greeted us warmly. We were mystified, who was this elegant, beautifully got up and coiffured lady? We continued our walk enjoying the singing that poured forth into the clear summer air from the many churches and chapels. The following morning mother met our kind and helpful, but rather slatternly neighbour from across the road, curlers in her hair, a grubby apron tied round her middle, her feet in down-at-heel slippers. "And did you all enjoy your walk yesterday morning?" she asked Mama, who could hardly contain herself -- so this was the elegant lady; the Cinderella transformation took place every Sunday morning.

One glorious Sunday, Beni and two of our cousins -- second cousins, to be exact -- decided to cycle to Barry Island, some twelve miles from Cardiff, to visit a German-Jewish family. I wanted to come along.

"It's a long ride, Betty," Beni warned me. "We boys go at a fast pace, I don't honestly think you can make it."

Well, that decided me. Beni had inherited the bicycle which Siegfried, our boarder in Hamburg, had left behind when he emigrated to Holland. I rode the bike belonging to the eldest of the three cousins who preferred staying at home with his nose in a book. All went well for the first couple of miles, after that I found it increasingly hard to keep up with the boys for I'd never been further than just beyond the last of the three Roath Parks. The moment came when I had to eat humble-pie and ask Beni to slow down. He was furious and deeply ashamed of his sister, but he spared me the "I told you so." In Barry we visited the family, who treated us to cake and cold drinks and we then continued to the beach along with two of their boys. Across the wide expanse of water we could just make out the coast on the other side of the Severn Channel. My idea of the local geography was of the haziest, surely that wasn't the Irish coast, even on as clear a day as this it ought not to be visible.

"That's England over there," a woman's voice with a lovely sing-song intonation broke in on my silent conjectures. I spun around.

"What do you mean 'that's England over there,' aren't we in England right here?"

There was a shocked silence. The woman studied me carefully. No, I obviously was not Welsh, nor yet English, so that my abominable ignorance was pardonable. I felt a plump arm around my shoulders:



"Look dear, this here is Wales," and she pointed to the ground on which we stood, and with a sweeping movement of her free arm "and that over there is England -- and never let me hear you say that again."

I promised faithfully and told her how much I loved Cardiff, the beautiful capital of Wales. All smiles now, she bade us goodbye.

"Wow, you put your foot in it good and proper," one of our hosts told me, shaking with merriment. "That poor woman nearly had a fit, it's only thanks to your foreign looks and accent that she didn't skin you alive."

But at least on the way home I managed to keep up with the boys. On our return we were greeted by grave faces. Aunt had tripped over the step from the breakfast room to the hall, dropping the tureen she had been carrying and some of the hot soup had splashed into her face causing painful burns. She was taken to Llandaff Hospital where she would have to stay for at least one week. Her daughter rang her employer, Mrs. Tubolski, informing her that she was not able to come as she'd have to keep house for her father and three brothers. The woman asked her to try and find a substitute, and that is how I came to work for Mrs. Tubolski.

"It's not really hard work," my cousin tempted me, "just a bit of cleaning and helping to prepare the dinner and you get five shillings and sixpence a week plus your dinner. There's only the two of them and Mr. Tubolski's a dear."

I should, of course, have drawn the inference that Mrs. Tubolski was not declared to be "a dear," but I was too excited to take note. I would earn 5/6 for a bit of help around the house, what a lark. In high spirits I set off on Monday morning. Mrs. Tubolski opened the door, a friendly smile on her face: "I'm so glad you've come to help an old and sick woman." She did not look very old, but it was difficult to judge as she wore a brown wig so

that I could not tell her real hair colour; she did not look sick either, but maybe she suffered from some invisible disease like Aunt who was diabetic but looked the picture of health.

"Come along now and help me make the beds."

A wave of fetid air hit my nose as she opened the bedroom door, the windows were shut even on such a warm and sunny day, the bedclothes had not been stripped and aired. Bedmaking in this household was rudimentary: the pillows were patted gently, the featherbed pulled into shape -- and that was that. Mrs. Tubolski pointed under the bed. She expected me to empty the chamberpot, and it stank to high heaven. I started heaving. "Don't be so fastidious," I chided myself, "your cousin's been performing this horrid task for many weeks uncomplainingly." I held my breath all the way to the lavatory, emptied the chipped vessel, pulled the chain, rinsed it, rushed back to the bedroom, deposited it under the bed and bolted from the room, congratulating myself for having made it without throwing up.

"Please help me peel the potatoes for lunch." I was given a knife and a heap of potatoes with half the United Kingdom sticking to them. At home we'd scrub such dirty potatoes before starting to peel them. I peeled them, cut them into quarters which I dropped into a saucepan half filled with water. Mrs. Tubolski watched me work. "There'll be chicken soup, boiled chicken and potatoes for lunch." My stomach rumbled, I was used to a snack at mid-morning. She had a steaming cup of coffee and a slice of cake in front of her on the table, maybe she'd offer me some once I'd finished peeling the potatoes? But no. "Thank you my dear, please go and sweep the livingroom." That room had a tired, gloomy look about it. The furniture was heavy and dull, the wallpaper of an indeterminate pattern on a beige background which would not show up dirt, but on the other hand could never have looked fresh even when brand-new. The bow-legged, plush-upholstered chairs ought to be brushed and dusted before being lifted, seats down, onto the table, but I had neither duster nor brush.

Oh, well, I'd just have to put them up as they were. Might be a good idea though to open a window and get the place aired through for once. I looked across the room towards the bay window. A deep leather armchair stood in the bay; from the depth of the chair, in the half-light, a pair of bright eyes gleamed and twinkled.

"Don't mind me, child. Kind of you to help us out. And how's your aunt?"

Mr. Tubolski's short, round figure almost disappeared inside the chair, a huge tome lay on his knees, a luxuriant grey beard covered most of his face and part of his chest -- it wouldn't matter if he did not wear a tie since the beard would anyway hide it. As though cut into the beard, a round mouth smiled at me, the whole apparition gave off an air of warm-hearted kindness and gentle humour. By the time I had swept the room it was past one o'clock and I was sick with hunger.

"Anyone want a Schmalzbemme?" I didn't know what a Schmalzbemme was, but since Schmalz was German for goose or chicken dripping, we were being offered something to eat.

"Yes please," I shouted back to the kitchen, "me too," Mr. Tubolski seconded and smiled at me.

In the kitchen I was handed a "doorstep" spread with chicken fat. It tasted delicious and I wolfed it down, realizing as I did so that I was spoiling my appetite for the lunch which must surely be ready by now. I managed the soup, the microscopic portion of chicken and the potatoes that were dished out to me. We were offered a second helping, but both Mr. Tubolski and I regretfully shook our heads. I had let my eyes slide surreptitiously to Mrs. Tubolski's plate, her piece of chicken was at least four times the size of ours. I promised myself that tomorrow I would hold out and not succumb to the offer of a Schmalzbemme, but came tomorrow and both Mr. Tubolski and I ravenously bit into our thick sandwiches.



I was free on Friday but had to go to work on Sunday. My parents let me keep the whole of my first week's wages and I had a wonderful spending spree at Woolworth's, choosing a little gift for every member of the family, and at the end of it I still had two shillings and sixpence left over with which I opened a Post-Office Savings Account. The best moment came on Friday evening after the blessing over the wine and the two Sabbath loaves when everyone lifted up their napkin and found my surprise. Even so, I was relieved when Aunt was sufficiently recovered for her daughter to return to the Tubolskis. Now I admitted to myself that I had hated the smelly house and parsimonious Mrs. Tubolski, how sad I felt for her kind and defenceless husband. And only now I told my parents about that most hateful of chores.

"She actually made you empty the chamber pot? What an imposition."

Papa added, "If we'd known, we'd never have let you go there again."

My parents exchanged meaningful looks: "Of course, they are not our kind of people," which I interpreted as "they are not German Jews."

Mama looked at me, "Why didn't you tell us before?"

Why hadn't I? Probably because I realized what their reaction would be and I hadn't wanted to be less courageous than my cousin and be considered a sissy by her more robust family, but I didn't tell my parents that either.

On weekdays my father, Uncle and many other male refugees went to the house of the Sterns for prayers, but on Friday evening and Sabbath morning we walked to the Windsor Place Synagogue. We liked the services there, but found the English pronunciation of the familiar Hebrew prayers outlandish and somehow ludicrous. Only the cantor sounded normal for he was a refugee like ourselves. One of his daughters was my age and I was invited round to her house. Ruth appeared older and more worldly wise, but we got on extremely well,

discussing our hopes, views and problems. It was good to have a friend once more. Ruth's older sister was an accomplished pianist and would occasionally play for us. I had never before listened to serious music because in Germany Jews were forbidden to enter concert halls and we had no radio, only a tinny children's gramophone. This young pianist was an enchantress, her fingers dancing on the keyboard transported me to imaginary, magical places. When she finished playing I came to with a start. However, her gift created a barrier between us, I felt shy of her and never once dared ask her to play for me.

My parents approved of my friendship with Ruth and I was thrilled when she came to visit me. But there was a snag. Since Uncle and family occupied the ground floor, they managed to get to the front door before us and only the most determined visitors succeeded in getting as far as our upstairs part of the house for they were firmly conducted to Uncle and Aunt's dining room, and by the time they were permitted to leave it was often too late for them to come up to us. Close friends were taken into our confidence and warned of this habit of appropriating all comers, but I could not bring myself to explain to Ruth. I felt, maybe unreasonably, that if she really valued me and our friendship she would manage to get past their detaining manoeuvre.

They made life difficult for us also in other ways. Being a lot rougher and tougher and not shrinking from noisy altercations, they had my parents at a disadvantage. The Sterns had discovered that though we occupied inferior accommodation we paid a considerably larger share of the rent, and without our knowledge, had taxed Aunt and Uncle with this unfair arrangement. Up the stairs marched those two when we children were all out of the house -- "Not too fine are you, you hoity-toity tell-tales, to complain of us to our friends, are you?"

"But we didn't."

"You must have, and don't think we'll just let it pass, you'll pay dearly for it, wait and see. Come on mother, let's not waste any more breath on them." And down they marched, stamping on the bare wooden stairs, back to their own spacious quarters. They had enjoyed themselves enormously, but had left my cultured and sensitive parents with feelings of frustrating impotence, shame and disgust. My parents did not tell us at the time of this and similar scenes since they did not wish to further poison the atmosphere in the house.

Both women cooked on the gas stoves they had brought from Hamburg, Aunt downstairs in what had always been a kitchen and mother in the makeshift one on the first landing. Each time a gas bill arrived Aunt complained to Mama:

"This bill is far too high for normal usage. It's all your fault with your inefficient and wasteful ways. We shouldn't have to pay half the bill, I've a good mind to get a separate meter for us."

"By all means, install a separate meter," Mama answered laconically. That's what they did and at least there were no more arguments over the gas bills; in fact, ours went down.

Aunt came upstairs as we were drinking coffee. She pointed to one of our silver teaspoons:

"How many have you got of those?"

"Eight."

"Then two belong to us, we miss two meaty ones."

Mama protested, "We brought these eight teaspoons from Hamburg, and as you can see they all belong to the same set."

"Two belong to us and I want them."

Wordlessly, Papa handed over two spoons. We were furious. After Aunt had left the room Mama turned on him:



"What got into you, Isskar? What on earth made you give her those two spoons when you know perfectly well that they are ours?"

"Sholom Bayis -- peace in the house -- is more important than two teaspoons."

Though father was dictatorial with us -- including mother -- Uncle and Aunt had that effect on him; he never put up a fight, but caved in right away.

"They'll be using our milky spoons for meaty, serve them jolly well right if they make their household treif (ritually impure)," was Jacob's comment, which made us laugh, in spite of ourselves.

Their eldest boy was intelligent and sensitive. His father had decided that he be trained as a ritual slaughterer and then despised him for his squeamishness. Late at night, when he was certain that his family was asleep, he'd tip-toe, in stockinged feet, up to my parents' room for a heart to heart talk. My parents never divulged what it was he discussed with them. They must have been gratified at the boy's confidence in them and at this opportunity to get their own back, at least in a small way, on their tormentors. The third family, Aunt's brother, his wife and their daughter had moved to a small boarding-house where they were employed to clean and cook. We were sorry to see them go for we had got on well with them.

In spite of everything, our friction with Uncle and Aunt did not manage to spoil that beautiful summer of 1939 -- at least for us children. On particularly sunny afternoons, their daughter, Ruth and I went swimming in Roath Park Lake so that I still enjoyed Ruth's company, but having to share it robbed our friendship of its former intimacy. Every Tuesday afternoon we three girls attended an interesting Shiur given by a young Jewish teacher from Germany. We translated Leviticus from Hebrew into German, and our teacher supplied us with explanations and comments to the biblical text by various medieval commentators. We had also formed an Ezra group and met every Sabbath afternoon. In Hamburg, boys and girls

had formed separate groups and only joined forces on special occasions such as a Purim party, but in Cardiff, with so few of us, segregation was impractical. We sang traditional Sabbath songs as well as modern Hebrew ones from present-day Palestine. There were talks on the portion from the Pentateuch and Prophets read in synagogue on that particular Sabbath. On Sundays we occasionally went on rambles and even played football -- girls were permitted to join in.

And so the summer came to a close, at least as far as the Cardiff -- and every other -- Education Committee was concerned. Back at school I was moved up to Form IV, the top class. Cookery was added to the curriculum. I had enjoyed the cookery lessons at my school in Hamburg, we had learnt to cook and fry fish -- not meat, of course, since there was no kosher meat -- to prepare vegetables, soup and rice and to bake a cake and Sabbath loaves, but now it meant cooking non-kosher food so that I could not even taste the results of my endeavours. The teacher therefore made me draw placards giving the vitamin and protein contents of different foods. Cooking is definitely more fun. The British had a peculiar way of preparing coffee, they actually boiled the milk together with the coffee -- what a brew, I could hardly get it down. The teacher suggested that for once I prepare the coffee our way. I boiled up a kettle of water, poured it on to the coffee grounds, waited until they had settled at the bottom of the coffee pot, poured a cup for the teacher and for each girl, inviting them to add milk and sugar to taste -- at last they'd know what a good cup of coffee ought to taste like. They tasted it, grimaced, and the next lesson went back to their horrid brew.

Back in Hamburg our class had learnt to swim when I was eleven. At that time we were still able to enter the municipal baths, but since then I'd had little opportunity to wear my swimsuit, Jews being forbidden the use of the baths; we were "undesired" even at the beaches.

Before our first swimming lesson at the Cardiff Baths I tried on my old woollen swimsuit at home. It was a tight fit, particularly across the chest, for being a child's size, no allowance was made for the appurtenances I had meanwhile developed. All of us girls were made to squat in a row along the edge of the pool. The teacher walked from one girl to the next, a gentle push and I was in the water. I'd never been so embarrassed in my life -- the impact of the water pushed one of my breasts sideways out of the confines of the suit and there it bobbed up and down, for all to see. Henceforth, though I loved swimming, I regularly developed a cold on the days that my class went to the Cardiff Baths.

Of the other two refugee girls in my class, one had been transferred to the Cardiff High School for Girls. I thought that the local Jewish family with whom she lived paid her school fees, but it turned out that she had been granted a scholarship. I wondered why I had not also been offered one since I honestly believed that I was at least as good a student. I was jealous. No good though to ask my parents about it, they'd only have accused me of being conceited -- one of the seven deadly sins -- maybe they really did not consider me good enough at school? Years later I found out that I too had been offered a scholarship. My parents had talked the offer over with ever helpful Mrs. Stern who warned them: "If Betty takes up the scholarship, you'll be made to sign an undertaking that you won't take her out of school before her sixteenth birthday; if you do, you'll have to pay back all the school fees. Your permit to live in this country being valid for only one year, Betty will still only be fifteen when you move on to America -- so you can't possibly sign the undertaking." As a result of their experience of officialdom in Germany, so my parents explained to me, they had been frightened to sign, failing to realize that leaving the country would have been accepted as a valid reason for me to leave school. I could have wept when I heard of my lost opportunity and cheerfully strangled well-meaning Mrs. Stern. Also the knowledge that I had



been deemed worthy of a scholarship would have reduced my outsize inferiority complex to more manageable dimensions.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the first of September Hitler marched into Poland. On Sunday the third, Mr. Chamberlain, Britain's Prime Minister, was to address the nation, announcing whether there was going to be war or peace. A neighbour down the road invited me to listen to his speech on her radio. War -- grant God, not for long. Now we were considered enemy aliens and would have to hand in any cameras in our possession. Beni and my cousins were no longer permitted to ride their bikes. I still could because under the age of sixteen one was not considered dangerous. I was also allowed to be out-of-doors after ten thirty in the evening - - at least in theory -- the adults had to be in their homes by that time. And they were forbidden to travel further than five miles without first obtaining a special permit from the Aliens Police.

We wondered how the neighbours would react to our new status. The third of September was a beautiful day and we spent the afternoon in the garden. The neighbours at the back, whom we hardly knew, gave us some seeds from their flowers to plant in our garden. The neighbours on the right passed us a bag of oranges over the fence and Mrs. Nicholson, on the left, beckoned to me.

"You'll want a map now to follow the war, I'll give you Mary's old school map, she doesn't need it any longer."

I was puzzled for in German a Mappe is a satchel or a briefcase.

"It's awfully kind of you, Mrs. Nicholson, but I have got a map in which to take my books to school."

Equally puzzled, she stared at me, disappeared into the house and a minute later returned with Mary's school atlas. It would have made us seem so dangerous and put us under such a heavy cloud of suspicion had I told her that we weren't supposed to have an atlas in the house. I therefore thanked her and accepted the gift offered in such a friendly manner. Our neighbours' kindness did much to lift our spirits.

People were unfailingly kind and pleasant, and according to my form-mistress, the kind of things that were taking place in Germany could never ever happen in this country. I would like to believe this, but then would anyone have thought the cultured Germans capable of such barbaric, inhuman conduct? Was civilization only skin-deep? I had fondly and foolishly believed in the inevitability of progress, that education made for understanding and tolerance, that blind prejudice, witch-hunts, the public burning of books -- as practised by the Nazis -- had disappeared for ever, long ago, along with such a crazy accusation as the blood libel. How anyone, even in their wildest dreams, could ever have believed Jews to be capable of using the blood of Christian children in preparing Matzot, the unleavened bread eaten on Passover, was beyond me -- why, we have to throw out an egg if it contains a drop of blood.

The atmosphere at home was sombre. We feared for all our dear ones left behind in Germany, their chances of escaping that hell were now almost nil; a few might still make it to the neutral United States, but our Oma's number was not due for quite a while yet. One of my cousins, who had entered England on a domestic servant permit, had scraped and scrounged until she had saved up a sufficiently large sum to obtain an entry permit for her parents. The permit reached them three days before war was declared and they had not made it. Since postal services no longer existed between Germany and Britain we wrote to Oma via

Uncle Markus in Holland and Fanny in Denmark, and Oma sent her letters by the same route. She wrote that when the perfume I had given her was used up she had the bottle refilled. Mama tried desperately hard to convince herself and us that Oma would be safe.

"Surely, not even the Nazis would bother to do anything to such an old lady."

I was not certain whether she meant it as a statement of fact, a rhetorical question or it was just wishful thinking.

"Of course not," we reassured her, "they have more important things on their minds nowadays with a war on."

However, having tasted the fanatical and relentless efficiency of their Jew-hunting and having seen with our own eyes the many and obvious preparations for war over the last few years, we had to admit to ourselves that the Germans were unfortunately quite able to persecute Jews as well as wage war -- especially as their adversary was largely unprepared. We just could not understand this unpreparedness. The Germans had made no secret of their preparations, it needed no secret agents to discover that the iron railings had been removed from parks and gardens, that air-raid shelters were being built, at school we had practised air-raid drill. How could foreign diplomats and tourists have missed the Nazi Brownshirts marching through the streets singing at the top of their voices such war-like songs as "Today Germany belongs to us -- Tomorrow the whole World!" A solitary voice had tried to get the urgent message across to a seemingly deaf and blind British Cabinet -- that of Winston Churchill -- who became my hero, but he had been accused of being a war monger. My parents tried not to let their own anxiety cast a gloom over our home.



Every Friday I took home a book from the school library and the following Friday I returned it unread. I had tried to plough my way through line after line with the aid of an English-German dictionary, but so many words needed looking up that progress was painfully slow. I gave up and borrowed books from the public library which had most generously acquired a great many new German books for the sudden influx of readers of German. I was ashamed to admit to Miss Bancroft that English books were still too difficult for me. A month or two later I decided to make another attempt with the book I had haphazardly chosen. To my utter joy, without looking up any words, I managed to understand the gist of the story -- a silly one -- all about a simpering, pale-complexioned, golden-haired, empty-headed nitwit whose pride and joy, a pair of patent leather shoes with silver buckles, had been spirited away by her class mates at boarding school. I was thrilled to have overcome this hurdle. Suspecting that Miss Bancroft realized that I had not read the library books and to prove to her my -- newly acquired -- ability I asked her the following Friday:

"Miss Bancroft, have you read this book? Isn't the heroine a silly goose?"

"I probably read it in my youth, but I don't really remember the contents. Mind you, I wouldn't have thought it the kind of book to appeal to you. I wonder you chose it," her smile was positively conspiratorial. "I'd like to recommend you a book I think you'd enjoy reading."

I nodded my agreement, "yes please, Miss Bancroft."

Secretly I was certain that Miss Bancroft had no idea what books would appeal to me. A large horse adorned the dustcover of the book she handed me.

"Thank you, Miss Bancroft," I'm afraid I did not sound overly thrilled.

Sabbath starts on Friday, an hour before sunset. In winter when the days are at their shortest this can be as early as half past three. In order not to desecrate the Sabbath we were

permitted to leave school early. We helped with the last preparations, such as laying the table for the Sabbath dinner. After it had all been eaten, the last hymn sung, Grace After Meals recited, the table cleared and I had washed the dishes which Beni wiped, I settled down as close as I could get to the warm fireplace. For nothing better to do I opened that week's school library book. "Black Beauty" had me enthralled. It was a wonderful book though terribly sad.

"Betty, the light will go out in another ten minutes," Mama warned me. I was back in our cosy room, the Sabbath candles had burnt low.

"And where have you been?" Beni teased me, "your book must be exciting for Fressjule not to have noticed the dish of chocolates being passed round."

Tante Kaatje had called me Fressjule -- greedy-guts -- because as a baby I gulped my bottle of milk at such a speed that I suffered from colic pains.

"Don't quarrel, children," father said, "go to bed quickly and quietly without waking the little ones. Come, Mama, the light will go out in a few minutes."

Mother sighed. "I'm too tired to get up and go to bed." Papa pulled her up from her chair and arm in arm they left the room.

One is forbidden to switch electricity on and off on the Sabbath, so a time switch performed this task. It was set for eleven thirty and once it had turned off the lights, they wouldn't come on again until the following afternoon. As soon as I awoke next morning and it was sufficiently light to make out the print, I pulled "Black Beauty" from under my pillow and read until it was time to get up and go to synagogue.

Chapter 8

School was still pleasant, but it had ceased to provide a challenge for it neither taxed my brain nor widened my horizon. The girls were nice, carefree beings and as far as I could make out not really interested in anything in particular; I got on well with all of them, but had no personal relationship with any of them. I admired them for their hardiness -- many still only wore cotton blouses even though it had turned bitterly cold -- until I found out that, like me, they wore a pullover, but under the blouse, which I considered cheating.

Some of us girls in Form IV were made prefects and sported a green and brown ribbon pinned to the blouse or pullover. I too became a prefect, but a prefect on probation because some of the teachers suspected that my still limited command of English might prevent me from carrying out prefect duties. I passed my first test with flying colours, but felt deeply ashamed of myself. The form-mistress of a lower class was absent and I was asked to take it for one lesson. The prefects who had looked after this class earlier that day had complained of Jean, a mischievous little girl. Jean behaved like an angel throughout my lesson and yet I went and complained of her. The teachers nodded their heads in sympathy: "Yes, Jean was a naughty little girl." What possessed me to behave so abominably? Was it to prove that I was in the swim of things at school? Every time I saw Jean I gave her a big smile, but that never stopped me from feeling like a worm.

Two prefects were delegated to wash the tea things in the staff-room after the long morning and afternoon break. I failed to understand why the girls considered this an enviable task. I had more than enough of washing-up at home. The main attraction was probably missing part of a lesson, but to my mind, washing-up was a poor substitute; the other was the opportunity this provided to penetrate the secrets of the staff-room. The furniture was of



the simplest: a large deal table covered with American wax cloth, plain wooden chairs, simple cupboards and a few easy chairs dotted around in the empty spaces. What fascinated me were the genteel cups and saucers of white bone china, decorated with anaemic flowers whose pale colours yet managed to clash hideously. The washing-up was done in cold water with a cotton mop. I was used to a brush that just needed rinsing. I disliked the mop which required thorough laundering after every use and which was invariably smelly and tacky when it was my turn to wash up.

There was one more Jewish refugee from Germany left in my class. Ella lived with a local Jewish family. Her own parents had been sent to Poland with the Polenaktion more than a year ago and she had heard nothing from them for many months. Her foster-father owned a cinema in Cardiff and once he invited me together with Ella to a pre-view of a film shown to cinema owners. The film, some stupid love story, was uninteresting, but it was sheer bliss to sit bone idle for two whole hours, inside the well-heated cinema in a comfortable, unholstered seat. During the school holidays Ella had stayed with me for a day and I had also stayed with her and her family. She was a good looking but superficial girl and I doubt if back in Hamburg we would have been friends. In the needlework lesson we were told to knit any article we liked. The British knit in a peculiar manner, they make sweeping movements with both hands and keep the ball of wool tucked under one arm. I was certain that our way was not only simpler, but also quicker; however the girls were so adept that I could never prove it to them. After one lesson when the teacher, pleasant Miss Cronin -- who lived opposite us and occasionally invited Gitta and me to her home -- had left the classroom, Ella picked up a knitting needle and slowly moved it closer and closer to my eye until I could almost feel the point touch my eyeball and then I did the same thing to her. The girls watched with bated breath, there were gasps of admiration for our display of courage, or was

it foolhardiness? Anyway, it was music in our ears. A few months later Ella and her foster family moved away from Cardiff and I lost contact with her.

I had become an ardent Welsh nationalist so that when it was announced in school that good students might start to learn Welsh, I jumped at the chance.

"No," mother said, "wait till your English is perfect."

"But school's getting a bit boring."

Mama had a brilliant idea: "Beni thoroughly enjoys his evening school, it might be a good idea for you to go and enroll as well."

Albany Road School was an old-fashioned, two storeyed building, partly stone, partly brick, and edged with high gables. It had a satisfying smell of chalk and books which was missing in the modern and airy Marlborough Road School building. I took dressmaking, hygiene, home nursing and English. I needed a pair of winter pyjamas and decided to make them in the dressmaking class. My parents permitted me to choose the material, giving me a free hand; I fell for a light blue, very soft flannel, patterned with tiny flowers. Even though we bought it in Clifton Street, the inexpensive shopping street, the extra expense must have made a hole in the household budget. On the other hand, the fees at evening school were extremely reasonable, just two shillings for the whole year, and I was told that if I pass the end-of-the-year examinations I would be given a book prize and would not have to pay at all for next year's tuition. If Beni, who was one year above me, passes his examinations he'll be awarded a scholarship to the Technical College. I enjoyed my evenings at Albany Road, the atmosphere was free and easy and we were treated more like adults; I think I was the only girl still at day school and not yet working. It was also fun to walk home in the black-out, though one night Beni walked smack into a lamp-post and came home with a huge, painful lump on his forehead.

My parents did not discuss the family's financial situation with us, but we knew that every penny had to do the work of two. Since the outbreak of war Uncle Markus and Aunt Marthe could no longer send money from Holland. However, now that so many people were called up and the labour force was greatly depleted the British government might be glad of every extra pair of hands and no longer fear that we would deprive the natives of jobs, and therefore grant us refugees working permits. Early in November a little help came in the shape of a boarder. Anthony was a Jewish medical student whose teaching hospital had been evacuated from London. He was English but his father came from Hamburg and the families knew one another. Anthony was quite a pleasant chap. One Sabbath afternoon he asked me to walk with him to the Cardiff docks. I had never been before and only knew that the way led past the public library. It turned out to be still quite a long walk from there. We passed a mosque and men who looked like Turks. Anthony greeted them with "Salaam Aleikum," they looked at him uncomprehendingly. I felt rather embarrassed at his presuming familiarity. On the way back he complained that a speck of coal dust had got into his eye and asked me to remove it with my handkerchief. I had to admit that I had none on me, he pulled out his and I tried to remove the speck which I could not even see. After a while he said that his eye was all right now -- must have been a miraculous cure since I certainly didn't remove anything from it. We walked the rest of the way in silence. He never again asked me to come on a walk with him -- can't say I minded.

At last refugees were permitted to apply for a work permit, but this was granted only if no British national wanted the job in question. Beni found work in a scrap metal yard. It was very hard and very dirty work, the pay was poor and he learnt nothing. His ambition was to become an optician. Father answered every even remotely promising advertisement in the Workers Wanted column of the South Wales Echo and the Western Mail, but to no avail. He



offered to teach the children in the community's Hebrew classes, he was prepared to give his services free of charge, if necessary -- he had so much to give those children -- but his offer was refused. Papa did give a few private lessons to a number of young people who appreciated his knowledge and love of teaching. These shiurim were unpaid but they gave Papa the satisfaction of passing on his learning and love of Judaism, and of not feeling entirely useless. But he badly needed a regular, paid job. Mama had another one of her good ideas, acted upon it and typed the following letter:

ROSI EMANUEL (née Mendel)

35, Claude Road,

Cardiff

16th Oct. 1939

Mr. WOLFF

c/o Messrs. Harland & Wolff

Glasgow

Dear Sir,

You do not know me, but I would be very much obliged if you will kindly read this letter.

My late father, Mr. Jacob Mendel, who has lived in Hamburg, was the son of Mr. Raphael Mendel, who owned a passenger office in Hamburg, and Mrs. Rosa Mendel née Rubinsky (Rubinstein). My father has told me that relatives of his, named Wolff, have gone to England many years ago. They have established a ship-building firm somewhere in England and so far as I remember he has mentioned the name of Harland and Wolff as being this firm. I wonder whether you are one of these relations or of their descendants?

Since April this year my family are in England, and I would like to get in touch with these relatives. My husband is not allowed to work in England, but I hope that soon he will get the permission. He is a very smart business man and is able to do all kind of office work or anything else.

I would be very glad to hear soon that you are one of my relations, and I remain

Yours sincerely,

Rosi Emanuel

A reply came with commendable speed:

Harland and Wolff, Limited

Shipbuilding & Engineering Works

Belfast

Mrs. Rosi Emanuel,

19th October 1939

35, Claude Road,

CARDIFF.

Dear Madam,

We are in receipt of your letter of the 16th October, but regret we are unable to help you with the information you require, as so far as we know none of the relatives of the late Mr. G.W. Wolff, who at one time was a partner in this firm, are still alive.

Yours faithfully,

For HARLAND AND WOLFF, LIMITED.

We suspected that the members of the Wolff family were afraid to admit to their existence in case we prove a liability to them.

Towards the end of November Miss Bancroft told me that she didn't think there was much point in my staying on at school for another term as it could not really teach me much more. Since that had also been my feeling for some time now, it was decided that I would leave at the end of the present term. Fortunately I had just completed my dental treatment at the free school clinic -- ten teeth had needed fillings. Also the other members of the family needed dental treatment, though my parents did without as they could not afford to pay a private dentist. We had all of us had our teeth seen to just before we left Hamburg and could not account for their sudden deterioration. Other refugees shared our trouble, and the theory was advanced that the water in Britain was responsible for our tooth decay. It certainly seemed unnatural that quite young people wore dentures in this country.

My end-of-term report which was also my school-leaving report was more realistic than the previous term's report; even so it was quite satisfactory, and this time I had earned it. I had heeded my parents' warning and continued to keep a check on my quick tongue. The result, in the shape of Miss Jenkin's testimonial School Leaving Report Card, made me squirm with embarrassment:

#### CITY OF CARDIFF EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Marlboro' Rd. Girls' School

Cardiff

19th Dec. 1939

I have much pleasure in testifying to the splendid character which Miss Betty Emanuel bears.



She is most painstaking in all she does -- is never known to have given her mistress anything but the best.

She is most keen, and has fulfilled her duties as a Prefect in a most satisfactory manner.

I am not afraid of saying that Betty Emanuel will succeed in whatever she takes on.

M. Jenkins

Head Teacher

\* \* \* \* \*

I had been happy at school and was grateful to the teachers for their unfailing kindness. They had never made me feel alien and unwanted. I was certain they realized that we were loyal residents of Britain who had even more reason than they to hate the Germans. But we had been wrong. Many years later, Miss Myerson, the only Jewish member of the teaching staff, told us just how wrong.

"One day as I walked into the staff-room the buzz of voices suddenly ceased, there was an awkward silence which was broken by one of the teachers:

'In a way, they're her people too.'

'Who are my people?' I wanted to know.

'Those refugees -- if that's what they are.' I was quite at a loss to account for the unpleasant atmosphere in the room.

'They are spies, that's what they are,' Miss Turner burst out.

'What makes you believe that?'

Miss Turner left me in no doubt.

‘Every morning, before it’s properly light, so my help, Mrs. Owen, told me, some odd-looking men, maybe ten or fifteen of them, hurry along Kimberley Road with funny cloth bags tucked under their arms. Why would those foreigners be carrying soft cloth bags with delicate instruments if not to contact their countrymen in Germany and tell them all our military secrets?’

‘Your Mrs. Owen lets her imagination run away with her, and I’m surprised at you, Miss Turner.’

‘You won’t be for long, Miss Myerson, I assure you. One evening at dusk, with my own eyes, I saw their menfolk slink silently along Kimberley Road, their coat collars turned up, their hats pulled half-way over their faces, made me fair suspicious after what Mrs. Owen had told me. So I decided to follow them. I knew they were up to no good. Refugees indeed!’

The other teachers nodded energetic approval, some of them looked at me with animosity for befriending spies, and others with pity for having been taken in by those foreigners.

‘I still don’t understand. What’s wrong with walking down Kimberley Road with your collar turned up and your hat well down? I bet it was raining.’

Miss Turner ignored my interruption and continued her tale.

‘Well, as I said, I decided to follow them. They were so sure of themselves, not one of them even bothered to look back and make sure he wasn’t being tailed.’

Miss Turner looked round proudly at her audience. All of them except for me had heard all this before, but such were her dramatic gifts that they waited breathlessly for what was still to come:

'I saw the first two stop in front of number 20, walk through the gate, up the garden path and knock at the front door. It was a special knock because the door was opened right away and they disappeared inside the house, and it was obvious that more were expected because they didn't close the door properly so that the others wouldn't even have to knock but could slip straight in.'

'And then, what happened?' Little Miss Ewert obviously could not wait to hear it all again.

'And indeed all of you,' she looked straight at me, 'ought to know what goes on behind the closed curtains in the front-room of number 20 Kimberley Road. Those refugees whom we took in with open arms, with pity in our hearts, trying to make them forget all they've been through in their own country, to quote our own dear Miss Jenkins, why, those same people are sending secret coded messages over the wireless straight to Nazi Germany!'

All eyes were turned indignantly on me.

'Since you said that the curtains were drawn, how could you tell what went on behind them?'

'If only you wouldn't constantly interrupt me,' Miss Turner sounded quite scornful. 'I clearly heard words and whole sentences, but I couldn't make out a single word. It certainly wasn't English, so it must have been German.'

'And sometimes you heard one voice, and at others they all seemed to join in, right?'

Miss Turner's jaw dropped. 'Then you've known all along? And if you knew what they're up to, why didn't you report them?'

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. 'Report them? Why should I report them? What's wrong with praying? Except for the Sabbath, when they attend services at Windsor Place Synagogue, those Jewish men and boys you saw, go to the house of friends for the



morning and evening prayer. And it's no wonder you didn't understand a word since they pray in Hebrew which is the language in which the Bible was originally written. Oh yes, one last point, the cloth bags -- they are usually made of velvet and hold their prayer shawl and prayer book.'

The deep silence that followed was shattered by the pealing of the end-of-break bell."

How odd that not one of the teachers had ever let us children feel the suspicions they harboured. Talking of suspicion, or the lack of it: There was that afternoon when I cycled through the military airport, without realizing that it was a military one. I had just got off the bike and was watching a plane take off when a soldier asked me if I hadn't seen the notice "No Admittance" at the gate. I had not because I'd entered by a side entrance. He told me not to ride the bike inside the airport, but to wheel it to the exit -- that was all. He ought to have been suspicious of me, an obvious foreigner, and at the very least have asked me for personal details. Very lax he was.

\* \* \* \* \*

One morning we had a dreadful fright. Gitta felt and looked ghastly, she ran a temperature of 40°C. Beni went to fetch our doctor. He suspected diphtheria, but it turned out to be a severe attack of tonsillitis. It seems that patients in Britain do not measure their temperature. First, the doctor made mother repeat the word "thermometer" until she pronounced it to his complete satisfaction and no longer said "termohmehter" as it is pronounced in German. Next he commanded:

"Now throw it out of the window."

"Certainly not."

"Then at least promise me not to use it again."

"Why ever not?" It did seem a strange request.

"It's the physician's job to measure a patient's temperature, you'd only get needlessly upset."

"But how is one to know if a patient is sick enough to need a doctor?"

He did not answer this justified question, but advanced another argument.

"Your thermometer's no good anyway. In this country we measure in Fahrenheit, not Celsius. It's far too time consuming and complicated to calculate from one to the other."

Mama mumbled something to herself and then announced triumphantly:

"40 degrees Celsius equals 102 degrees Fahrenheit."

The doctor gazed at mother with wide-eyed admiration; he never again tried to lord it over my parents and treat them like slightly backward children. As a matter of fact, he was a kindly man, for he asked one of us children to come to his surgery for the medicines Gitta required, and he took them from his stock of medical samples, which saved us a mint of money.

Mrs. Ada Cohen, one of the few local Jews who took a personal interest in us, came and brought Gitta a picture book, cake and fruit. At least Gitta knew better than Raphael how to express her thanks. On an earlier occasion when Mrs. Cohen gave him an orange and Mama prompted him: "What do you say, Raphael?" he'd come up with: "Many happy returns!" We never did find out whether he knew no better or was trying to be funny.

Gitta got well just in time for Chanukkah. On account of the black-out we could not place our Chanukkah lamps by the window. When the war began in September people believed that it was sure to be over by Christmas. We were not as optimistic having watched

Germany prepare for war, but maybe next Chanukkah our lights would once more stand on the window sill proclaiming the Chanukkah miracle as well as celebrate the contemporary victory of the forces of light over the contemporary forces of darkness. We played our traditional games -- peanuts were our stakes this year; our parents had somehow managed to buy a little present for each one of us.

Mama had saved up several shillings and decided that they should be spent on a hat for me to wear to the synagogue in place of my everyday navy beret. We went to town together and at Howells bought a large, serious-looking navy felt hat. It was not easy to find one halfway becoming because of my two plaits. Girls in this country didn't wear their hair in plaits, but they were fashionable in Germany. Not far from Howells was the public library where we changed our books at least once a week. Even in war time the German shelves were stocked with new books. I must say it was extremely generous of the municipality to have bought books in the language of the enemy with which the country was at war. One of the books I borrowed, called "Flight to the Homeland" by C.N. Cuschler, stressed the fact that a man's place is in his own country. I firmly believed that my homeland was Palestine, the Land of Israel, to which I shall and must get. How, I did not yet know. For the present there was a lot of work to be done here. And then? Who knows? "Man proposes, but God disposes," as we were taught.

A scroll-shaped package arrived for us from Stroud, sent by the Burtts, our acquaintances from the SS Manhattan. "A sausage" -- was our pessimistic guess. "What a pity they sent something we are not permitted to eat." Before we had even unwrapped the parcel, we wondered to which one of our non-Jewish neighbours we should give the sausage. The last bit of wrapping paper was removed, and there it was -- a large jar of honey, a most welcome gift -- with an accompanying letter:



Feb. 2nd. 1940

Dear Mr & Mrs Emanuel,

We were absolutely thrilled to get your letter at Xmas and we are so sorry we have not replied to it before -- We mislaid it, and so could not find your address. Perhaps it is still not too late to wish you a very happy New Year.

We are so glad to hear that you have settled down so happily here and that the children like their school. It will be very nice for your eldest daughter to learn dressmaking and we do hope that the 'permit for work' will soon come for you as you wish.

We remember you so well on the 'Manhattan' and how jolly all your family looked as they came in to breakfast, and we were wondering where you had come from and what it felt like to be coming to a quite strange country.

Our eldest boy has left school and is now at Oxford University, studying science.

We are sending you a jar of honey from our bees on the Cotswold hills, with greetings to the whole family. We should be most pleased to hear from you again, from time to time, as to how you are getting on.

You are learning English splendidly!

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Ephraim Burt,

Ruth Burt,

also John and Michael."

Unlike Mrs. Burt I did not think it at all "nice" to learn dressmaking. Mother regretted not being able to sew -- apart from mending our socks. She was even afraid to cut out a patch

with which to repair a torn sheet. "I miss not having learnt even the rudiments of dressmaking; it's so useful especially with a large family. I know sewing isn't exactly your favourite occupation and I don't insist on you becoming a dressmaker. Just learn it for one year -- in years to come you'll be glad you did."

Mama told our friend, Mrs. Cohen, that she would like me to learn dressmaking, and Mrs. Cohen arranged for me to start working for a Mr. Woolfe in Cowbridge Road. I was paid three shillings and sixpence a week from which I was allowed to keep 9p. Cowbridge Road is on the other side of the River Taff right across town, but taking a tram would have used up all my pocket money, so I usually walked.

Mr. Woolfe was not a dressmaker, but a tailor. In fact, a superior tailor who specialised in suit jackets and usually farmed out the trousers to be made up by simpler, less expensive tailors. He had five women and a presser working for him. Like Mr. Woolfe, the presser was Jewish; he was supposed to be stone deaf, but everything not meant for his ears he heard perfectly well. I was taught to herringbone stitch the canvas lining of jacket collars and revers; if the stitching is not perfect the collars and revers won't sit well. It's quite easy to do, merely time consuming, but there was always plenty of time, no one was ever hurried, the atmosphere was pleasant and relaxed. I had been with Mr. Woolfe for two months and I had still not been taught anything apart from stitching the canvas linings -- not that I cared really, since the last thing I wanted to be was a tailor. I ought to have objected to being employed as an errand girl, but it turned into my favourite task. The walk into town across the Taff bridge was always pleasant and interesting. Mr. Woolfe usually gave me twopence for the tram, but I only used this fare money when it poured, otherwise I bought sweets on the way. I walked very fast so that Mr. Woolfe lost next to nothing of my time. At Robertson's, the Men's outfitters in Kings Way near Cardiff Castle, I had a pleasant

experience. I delivered several suits to a white-haired old gentleman in one of the upstairs rooms. He was just about to go out and as he started to put on his overcoat I helped him into it as I had been brought up to do by my father. He stared at me long and thoughtfully, looked around the room and handed me a small suitcase.

"As it's just started to rain I'll lend you this case. It'll keep your things dry on the way back to Mr. Woolfe."

"Thank you very much indeed." I was touched by the old man's thoughtfulness.

"But mind you bring it back next time you come."

I had reverted to my role of errand girl.

I delivered suits to another elegant men's shop, this one was in Queen Street. On my second or third visit, as I handed a suit across the counter, I saw the two young salesmen exchange meaningful looks. They nodded and one of them beckoned to me. Filled with curiosity I followed him behind the counter, to the back of the shop and out through a door which led into a yard filled with carts, lorries and delivery vans. He crossed the yard with me and pointed towards one corner: "That'll take you back to Queen Street. Always come this way in future. The street entrance is reserved for our customers." Several shops had their goods delivered in this yard, but the curious thing was that I never once encountered another human being. The many vehicles stood abandoned. There was always a lorry loaded with huge glass jars of Barker and Dobson sweets, including chocolate eclairs -- they made my mouth water. My mind boggled as I tried to calculate how many quarter pounds one single jar might contain. On my way back I tried to race a tram, there was a crowd waiting to get on at the next stop. I was sure that this time I would catch up with it, but I never once succeeded. Back at Mr. Woolfe there was, as often happened, nothing for me to do. I found



a heap of discarded pattern books of woollen suiting and asked for permission to stitch them together on one of the sewing machines, and made two patch-work blankets for home.

It was a very cold winter; the locals claimed that it was the coldest winter for fifty years. At school, back in Hamburg, we had learnt that the Gulf Stream which flows along the west-coast of Britain makes for mild winters -- either our geography teacher had been mistaken or the Gulf Stream had altered its course. My parents considered it unhealthy for me to live on sandwiches all day long in such cold weather, and therefore arranged for me to eat a hot lunch at the hostel for young Jewish refugees who had come to Britain from Germany and Austria without their parents. The hostel was in Cathedral Road, not far from my place of work. The food was good and plentiful, and the German-Jewish family, a Rabbi and his wife, who were in charge of the hostel, were pleasant and helpful people. In order to be back at work on time I had to run off as soon as I had finished eating, which was not really polite. "Work" was a misnomer, for I worked little and learnt nothing, so that when Gwen Morgan, a fellow student at night school, told me that the dressmaker for whom she worked was looking for an apprentice, I decided to apply for the position. Papa came with me to see Miss Blackford in Bangor Street. She was a tall, somewhat forbidding looking, middle-aged woman. She scrutinized me and my father.

"We do only high-class dressmaking. Gwen tells me you worked for a tailor."

Miss Blackford walked up to a dressmaker's dummy and pointed to the as yet unlined and sleeveless jacket draped on it.

"What do you think of it?"

My reply shot out: "The stitching on the collar and revers isn't as neat as it might be."

Miss Blackford nodded her agreement. "Very well, I'll take you on. If you apply yourself you'll learn a great deal here. You'll be paid two shillings and sixpence a week."

"At Mr. Woolfe's I got three and six."

"You are lucky to be getting anything at all. My other girls had to pay me a premium before I agreed to take them on."

I knew this to be true from Gwen and had worried about it. My parents still let me keep 9p a week for myself. Bangor Street is not far from Claude Road so that I saved on fares; on the other hand I had a new expense: I had recently started my period and the monthly expenditure of a packet of sanitary towels made a big hole in my pocket. Some girls used bandages which they washed and re-used, but however hard up I was, I wasn't prepared to face such a horrid task; besides, what could I possibly tell my brothers and sister to explain bandages drying over the bath tub? The first few times I used the pads which Mummy had brought from Germany, but now no longer needed as she had reached the menopause. She had hidden the bulky packages right at the back of the wardrobe. I had discovered them a long time ago and had studied the instruction leaflet which illustrated how to fasten the end loops of the pads to a special sanitary belt. The whole thing was revolting and I envied the boys who were spared this unaesthetic monthly inconvenience; my only consolation was that at least I was spared having to shave every morning. Since the Bible prohibits the use of a knife with which to shave, religious Jews must not use razor blades. Those who could afford it bought an electric shaver or went to a barber to be shaved with his machine. Others used hand clippers which pinched the skin and left a man looking somewhat stubbly. There was also a powder which, with the addition of a little water, turned into a white pap. It was smeared onto cheeks and chin, left on for a while, and then rinsed off. The powder must have contained sulphur because for at least an hour after having been used, the whole house reeked of rotten eggs. Fortunately, Daddy's skin was allergic to the powder, but when Beni used the smelly stuff and not the clippers on his vigorous growth of jet black hair,

it was a punishment for the whole family. Beni had recently left the scrap-metal yard for a firm which made optical lenses. The pay was poor and he was given all the dirty and unpleasant jobs to do, but he hoped that in the not too distant future the boss would keep his part of the bargain and teach him at least the rudiments of his chosen profession. At least I had nothing to complain of on that score.



Chapter 9

At work Gwen took me under her wing. "Pull up your socks, Betty, and get on with that hem. Mrs. Williams is due for a fitting at eleven and it's ten already."

I did not see what my socks had to do with it, but obediently pulled up my knee-length stockings as high as they would stretch. Peals of laughter greeted my effort. I felt very foreign, even more so as all the other girls wore thin lisle stockings -- in Britain knee socks were not worn by girls. I finished the hem at such speed that Miss Blackford praised me:

"I'm glad to see that you can work quickly, Elizabeth. I was afraid you wouldn't finish the hem before Mrs. Williams is due at three and I would have to get one of the other girls to finish it for you."

"Elizabeth?"

"I shall call you Elizabeth, Betty is anyway only short for Elizabeth."

"But my name is really Betty and not Elizabeth."

"Oh, no, I couldn't possibly call you by that name, I've a horrible neighbour living next door called Betty -- so Elizabeth you'll be."

That was alright with me. I had never liked my name, it sounded plebeian. Elizabeth was much finer, aristocratic even -- there was Princess Elizabeth, my junior by a year. Later on I taxed Gwen:

"What on earth made you say Mrs. Williams was due for a fitting at eleven o'clock when her appointment is only for three?"

"You've been an awful slowcoach. This was the only way I could think of to make you step on it. And it did the trick, didn't it?" Gwen hesitated and then blurted out: "Miss

Blackford said you'd never make the grade and she'd have to get rid of you unless you learn to put on some speed. Now that you know you can, I'm sure you'll never be slow again.

I was grateful to Gwen, but disliked Miss Blackford for never having let on to me how dissatisfied she was with my work. It took me some time to learn that in this country it is not considered "nice" to tell people anything unpleasant to their face nor what they really think of one. Maybe that is why the answer to the common greeting "How are you?" is not a recital of one's woes, but merely "Very well, thank you" and to "How do you do?" it is "Howdyoudo." "Nice day today" is another such non-committal remark, even when an icy wind straight from the north pole whistles round your ears, you dare not contradict, but smiling brightly, reply, "yes, isn't it." Then there is the matter of the record: "We haven't had such a hot summer for the last fifty years"; the winter too was a record: "we haven't had such a cold winter for the last fifty years." I never found out why it was always fifty years -- maybe no records were kept before that? And then there are the readers' letters in the newspapers: A reader from Pen-Y-Lan asked: "I heard a cuckoo on the 29th of March, is that a record?"

Not long after I had begun to work at Miss Blackford I noticed that whenever the front door bell rang I was sent to open it and conduct the customer to the fitting room. Was it because of my status as the latest arrival? Not at all.

"The customers like you to open the door," Miss Blackford informed me, an ironic smile playing on her thin lips. "You look and sound so funny and foreign."

This truly upset me. I hated being an attraction on exhibition like the Fattest Lady of the Land or the Smallest Man in the World at the Dom in Hamburg where people paid to goggle at freaks of nature. From now on I tried to get out of opening the front door. Also I was disappointed that after a year in Britain I still spoke with a foreign accent. I myself did

not hear it and had fondly believed that I had got rid of it. Miss Blackford was a kindly soul really; on a particularly hot day she liberally sprinkled cooling 4711 toilet water down our sweating backs, down my back no less than down those of the others. Yet, a few minutes later she told me gleefully:

"I'm just waiting for the 'tramp, tramp' of heavy boots on the stairs when they come for you."

I looked at her uncomprehendingly.

"When the police come to take you away as a German spy!"

I was dumbfounded. Why should she waste expensive 4711 on a German spy? Did she honestly suspect me of being a Nazi? I could not and would not believe that. I arrived at the conclusion that Miss Blackford yearned for some excitement in her barren, old-spinster life. According to the girls, her fiancé had been killed as a soldier in the First World War; her heart broken, she had never married anyone else. It was a romantic tale and I did not hold Miss Blackford's craving for sensation against her.

It was not really surprising, under the circumstances, if people became panicky or suspicious. Holland, Belgium, France, Denmark and Norway had been overrun by the German army, Britain was certain that she was next on Hitler's list and that he was about to attempt an invasion of the British Isles. The population was warned to watch out for anything suspicious, to report immediately any strange movements and landing crafts on the coasts; huge placards proclaimed: "Be like Dad -- Keep Mum," or "The Enemy is Listening"; then there was a picture of a woman talking on a public telephone while Hitler's face looked into the kiosk. People were not to discuss even seemingly innocuous subjects in public lest they prove of military significance to the enemy agents and spies in our midst. Even now, it was



rumoured, there was a Fifth Column in operation which was preparing the ground for the German invasion.

There was the problem of how to separate the wheat from the chaff -- who were genuine refugees from Nazi oppression and who were German spies? In order to solve this problem tribunals were set up in the larger towns where aliens from the countries with whom Britain was at war were to be judged. They were classified in three categories: "A" -- Enemy Aliens -- who were interned immediately; "B" -- Enemy Aliens -- to be kept under strict observation; "C" -- Friendly Enemy Aliens.

My parents and Beni -- I was still under sixteen and therefore not considered dangerous -- were ordered to appear before the Aliens' Tribunal. One of the men appointed as a judge was a tiny, shrivelled-up old man, his feet resting on a plush-covered foot stool. He pronounced everyone either "A" or "B", no Friendly Enemy Aliens existed for him. My parents and Beni were made "B". There was a Czech lady who was made "A", she protested at this seemingly arbitrary judgement: "I've built up a factory on the Treforest Trading Estate. If you intern me, the factory will have to close down and my workers will lose their jobs. Please, do reconsider your decision. Surely, I've supplied you with sufficient proof to convince you of my loyalty to this country." The horrid old man shrugged his shoulders: "Next." One of our friends, a nurse working at the Llandough Hospital, was made "A" and interned -- why? She had been heard typing in her room at the hospital. What would a nurse be doing with a typewriter? The fact that her old mother suffered from poor eyesight and was unable to read handwritten letters was not considered a valid reason. One could almost hear the judge pronounce, like the Queen in Alice in Wonderland: "Off with her head." A few weeks later my parents, Beni and many other Jewish refugees received another summons to

the Aliens' Tribunal; thank goodness the nasty crab-apple of a man had been replaced, and this time they were made "C".

This was going to be our second summer in Cardiff. We were only too happy to be permitted to remain in Britain and not to have to move on to the United States. Daddy continued to give a few private lessons. Mummy was becoming expert at keeping house in a strange country; she and father had even mastered the hitherto unfamiliar art of lighting an open fire. In Germany fireplaces were unknown. Beni was still working for the optician. He had passed his end-of-the-year examinations at Albany Road Evening School in autumn, and he intended to enrol at the Technical College in order to study the theory of optics and thus become a qualified optician. I too had passed all my examinations: first class in English, handicraft, needlework and practical hygiene and second class in theoretical hygiene; I was to be awarded a free studentship for a second year at any Junior Evening Institute in Cardiff as well as a committee prize. My hope revived that one day I should still manage to train as a teacher of physical training. Hadn't mother stipulated that I learn dressmaking for just one year and not as a profession? The three little ones were happy at Marlborough Road School. Jacob was certain to win a scholarship and start grammar school in September. We had made friends and were building up a pleasant social life. In short -- we had settled down.

And then the blow fell. On the first day of Pentecost my parents were ordered to the Aliens' Police.

"Cardiff is a Protected Area and close to the sea," they were informed, "Enemy Aliens are not permitted to reside in a Protected Area nor within twenty miles of the sea -- Cardiff is both."

"But surely, that doesn't apply to us, we were given "Friendly Enemy Alien" status by the Aliens' Tribunal."

"You are enemy aliens, nevertheless, and within three days you must leave Cardiff and move at least 20 miles inland."

My parents talked things over with the other refugee families. None of us had anywhere to go.

"On top of everything else, we can't do anything for three days," they wailed. "Today and tomorrow is Pentecost and the day after it's Sabbath -- there go our three days of preparation -- and on Sunday we have to be gone."

"Let's apply to the Reverend Jerevitch," mother suggested, "he's our go-between with the authorities. I'll ask him to try and get a few days' postponement of the expulsion order. We've never bothered him about anything, he ought to do that much for us."

Father nodded his agreement. "Fine, I'll come with you, we'll both go."

A maid opened the door at the home of the Rev. Jerevitch. The Reverend was distraught, he threw up his hands:

"I know what you've come about. There's absolutely nothing I can do for you. I'm sorry, but you don't really believe I can change a government decree?"

"We are well aware that you can't change the law, all we are asking is that you, as our intermediary, explain to the Chief Constable of the Aliens' Police that on account of the Jewish holidays, as you know yourself, we can do absolutely nothing to prepare for our move and try to find somewhere else to go, and could all of us refugees therefore be granted three days' grace."

My parents were asked to come back for an answer the following day.

"Wonderful news," the Reverend greeted them, "the Chief Constable permits you and all the other refugees to stay in Cardiff till Tuesday evening, you've been granted the extra three days you requested."



There were some exceptions to the expulsion order. Ruth Zucker and her family were allowed to stay on because her father was the cantor at the Windsor Place Synagogue; belonging to the clergy he may have been considered above suspicion. The Sterns were allowed to move to near-by Porth, their paint factory on the Treforest Trading Estate being under government contract.

I went to say goodbye to Miss Blackford. I had enjoyed my time with her and her girls and had learnt a great deal. She appeared genuinely sorry to see me go -- the poor lady had been balked of the exciting "tramp, tramp" of heavy police boots on her stairs. Our neighbours too were upset. Mrs. Nicholson waxed quite indignant:

"You and your family spies! How much sillier can our government still get? We shall miss you ever so much. Where are you going?"

"To Manchester."

"You are going to England? You're leaving us?"

I felt a traitor to the Welsh cause. Actually the obvious choice would have been London, but my parents feared that with so many refugees in the capital already, we stood little chance of finding work and establishing ourselves. Manchester was said to have a large orthodox Jewish community. Our Cardiff friends, the Cohens, gave us the name and address of relatives of theirs in Manchester. We ourselves didn't know a soul in that city.

Now followed three hectic days of planning and packing. It was decided that the three little ones stay at the hostel -- where I had eaten lunch when I worked for the tailor -- for a few days, until we had rented a house in Manchester. Uncle would travel on ahead of us and rent temporary furnished rooms for his family and for us. If at all feasible, each family would henceforth live in a little house on its own, this was the one and only consolation in this sad business of leaving Cardiff. We obtained large cardboard boxes and tea chests from our

grocer. A young refugee friend who had lived with us for a while after Anthony, the medical student, had left, and who was permitted to stay on in Cardiff, offered to supervise the removal men we planned to send from Manchester. The Cardiff Jewish Community helped us financially with the move, a fact that I did not know until many years later. On Tuesday morning I took Jacob, Gitta and Raphael to the hostel. Our train left at 12.40 and at 5.40 we arrived in Manchester. Uncle and a girl of my age who was born in the same place as Aunt, met us at the station. The adults took a bus to the Salford Aliens' Police in order to register and we two girls went by taxi with all the cases to our temporary accommodation in Bury New Road, Higher Broughton, Salford 7. As we soon learnt -- though it is frequently difficult to know whether one is in Salford or Manchester -- Salford is a separate city with its own municipal services, including public transport, which greatly complicated getting around and often necessitated having to take two buses.

Our rooms were large and sufficiently bright to show that they had not enjoyed a thorough clean-up for many a month. The first thing mother did was to lift up the shaggy, woollen hearth rug -- which reminded me of a black poodle -- with the tips of her fingers and gingerly deposit it outside on the landing. I thought it had added a touch of luxury to the room and was sorry to see it banished; mother thought otherwise: "A dirt-trap, or worse." She eyed the two capacious, rather grimy chintz-covered easy chairs with grave misgivings, but since there was no room for them on the landing, she reluctantly permitted them to remain. The next few days were spent walking around the more modest streets of Broughton, looking at houses to be let. Broughton was a Jewish district and even had a number of German Jewish families who had organized their own religious services.

On our second or third night in Salford I was woken up by the wailing of an air-raid siren. Shaking with fear I dived under the blanket, it seemed there was no escaping Hitler after

all. After what seemed an eternity the door opened and my parents walked in on tip-toe to find out whether the siren had woken me. It was good to see them and I told them so. "Why didn't you come to our room if you were frightened?" they wanted to know. A little later the All-Clear sounded -- how we came to love that sound. On Tuesday, precisely a week after we had left Cardiff, at 7.30 in the morning three men marched up the stairs, shouting "Emanuel, Emanuel." They had come to intern Daddy, Beni, Uncle and his three boys. The men searched through all our belongings, leaving them in an untidy mess; we utilized this time to quickly pack five suitcases, one for each internee. Mother asked where and when we could bring our men some food since there would be nothing kosher available wherever they would be taken into custody. She was told to be at the Salford Police Station in Chapel Street at exactly two thirty. Three quarters of an hour after the men had come, they all left in a Black Maria. From the little money we had, we bought a salami sausage and a dozen eggs which we hard-boiled, and made sandwiches. On the dot of 2.30 mother turned up at the Salford Police Station. All was quiet and empty. The internees had been moved at two o'clock. "Had they left earlier than was planned?" she enquired. No, not a bit of it! For a week we lived on eggs and salami sandwiches, they stuck in our throats as we thought of our hungry men and the nastiness of the policemen. For ourselves we would never have bought such an expensive luxury as salami; Mama had chosen it for its keeping quality and so that Daddy and Beni would have something nourishing to eat.

Now we four women were alone in a large, strange city, all by ourselves. I was convinced that God had a special purpose and designs for us and that we lived in the period preceding the coming of the Messiah, into which, according to the Sages, no one would choose to be born. It is prophesied as a time of world conflict when fire and brimstone would rain down from the sky. The Messiah, a descendant of the Royal House of David, will come



riding on a donkey from the Wilderness of Judea and enter the Holy City through the Gate of Mercy. In the middle ages the Muslims had walled up this gate in Jerusalem's city wall, but that should not prove an insurmountable obstacle to the Messiah. And since I am fated to live in these dreadful times preceding his coming, I hope I shall live long enough to partake also of the blissful time when swords will be turned into ploughshares and when the nations will recognize the true God. I would also like to witness the ingathering of the Jewish exiles from all over the world, so movingly foretold by the Prophet Isaiah. In my dreams I saw the new arrivals stand next to my cousins Lea and Sofie at the well of their Kibbutz, as they watered the sheep, though I knew that the Kibbutzim, the modern cooperative agricultural settlements, have piped water. Maybe my dream was influenced by the biblical stories of the meetings of Eliezer with Rebecca and of Jacob with Rachel at the village well where the girls had gone to water their father's flocks.

But here I was in Manchester and not in Palestine. On this Tuesday father was to have finalised renting a small house. Uncle had already rented a house at 7, Wellington Street West, a few minutes' walk from our temporary rooms. We women decided that the two families move in together so as to save rent, once the men were back each family would live in a house on its own. No. 7 was badly in need of repair, the landlord had promised to repair the leaking roof, the missing skirting boards and the broken kitchen and bathroom sinks. The workmen failed to come. Mother and Aunt went to see the landlord: "I did promise your husband, but I hear he's behind lock and key; you may move in, but don't expect me to do any repairs for you." What a mean, cruel man. We had to find another house.

Mama, Aunt and daughter had gone together to the Aliens' Police. I stayed behind to guard our rooms. There was a knock at the door, a lady asked to see Mrs. Emanuel. Her husband was a Methodist Minister in Urmston near Manchester. She had been sent by a

business friend of Uncle Ludwig and Aunt Hadassah to see how we were managing without Daddy. "I've come to see if you have a decent roof over your heads, if not, you come and stay with us. I've told my family I might well come home with the mother and four children." I thanked her for her fantastically kind offer, but we were quite all right really. She promised to keep in touch with us. As a matter of fact, our accommodation was not all that "decent." The rooms were swarming with mice. On Friday night Mummy woke me:

"Betty, are you awake? Listen, I can hear mice nibbling paper, what if they are eating the Torah scroll which we had been asked to take with us to safety from our synagogue in Hamburg? We can't have it damaged by mice."

"Of course not, what d'you want me to do?"

"Get up please, wrap it in a blanket and put it on top of the wardrobe, d'you think you can do that?"

I didn't relish the job. As it was Friday night, our Sabbath, I was not allowed to switch on the light. Gingerly I put my toes down on the floor, afraid of stepping on one of those impudent mice. But I had no choice, I fully agreed with mother, the precious Torah scroll simply ~~must~~ not be endangered. With the first light of dawn we examined it, thank God it was all right, but the mice had drunk the soap water Mummy had prepared because one must not wash one's hands with a cake of soap on the Sabbath -- black mouse dirt floated on the remains of the soap water -- serve those mice right if they came down with diarrhoea as a result. The following morning mother discovered a round, brown insect on a towel. She had never seen a bed-bug in her life, but suspecting the worst, she put it inside an empty match-box to show to Aunt. On opening it an hour later, the box was empty; however a brief search was "rewarded" by another bug. Aunt confirmed mother's diagnosis, so the quicker we got out of these filthy rooms and moved into a house with our own furniture, the better.

We rented a house a few doors away from number 7; this one was number 1; being so close would, so we hoped, cut down the expenditure of another removal. We were dreadfully short of money.

It was a great day when we moved to 1, Wellington Street West. The house was quite spacious; it had seven rooms on three levels. The attic, intended as a maid's bedroom, became our store-room. Along the front of the house stretched a narrow strip of garden, overgrown with weeds, except for a horse-chestnut tree in flower, and two tall trees flanked the entrance which gave the house a classy and mysterious look. The scullery opened on to a small, concrete yard -- a come-down after our beautiful garden in Cardiff. There was only one kitchen for the two families; Aunt asked mother to have our gas stove connected up -- "Being more modern, it uses less gas than mine," rather comical that, after her wild accusations in Cardiff.

That night there was another air-raid, bombs had been dropped on Cardiff. Fearing for the safety of the children, mother rang the hostel and asked to have them put on the train to Manchester still that same day. I went to the station to meet their train. They were happy to be reunited with us, but deeply upset at not having had a chance to say goodbye to their teachers and friends. They brought back the train fare which my parents had left with them; our dear, generous Cardiff friends, the Cohens -- who had brought Gitta and Raphael presents when they were ill and who had got me the job with the tailor -- bought their train tickets, telling them to give the money my parents had left with them for the fares back to mother.

On his first morning in our new house, Jacob woke up feeling itchy all over. He had come out in a peculiar kind of rash which Mummy was unable to associate with any childhood illness. Experienced Aunt had one look at Jacob's neck:

"Bed bugs, no doubt about it." Mother made for the stairs.



"It's too late now," Aunt told her, "they'll have climbed up the wall, back to their nest; still, let's go upstairs and have a look at Jacob's pillow and sheet." Sure enough, there were tell-tale red spots of blood. Mother went to the chemist.

"Friends of ours suspect that they've got bed bugs; can you recommend some effective poison?" He fetched out a cardboard drum of Keatings Insect Powder.

"Try that, Madam." It did the trick -- for a few days. Mother kept on going back for another box and another. She felt guilty at having brought bugs into the house, though she did not understand how. Jacob and Raphael had not stayed with us in the dirty rooms in Bury New Road, and yet theirs was the only room in the house with bugs. Also, she had been careful to make quite certain that none of the creatures would manage to stow away in our cases and even if any of them should have succeeded to evade her sharp eyes, how could they have multiplied and become a real pest in the space of one day? The mystery was solved by a friendly neighbour: the house had stood empty for a long time because it was known to be infested with bed bugs! And here mother was spending a fortune on Keatings, quite apart from the unpleasantness and the shame of it. On his next visit to collect the rent she taxed the landlord with her new knowledge. Somewhat shamefacedly, he agreed to reimburse her for the insect powder. The battle of the bugs lasted for many a month until they were finally and permanently routed.

The children attended St. John's School which was just up the road, but that was its only advantage. The different classes were divided by screens like in an old fashioned village school and the educational standard was much below that of Marlborough Road. My cousin and I found work as machinists in a factory producing boys' trousers in Back Hilton Street, a short walk from home. The owner offered me eighteen shillings a week and my cousin, who was already seventeen years old, one pound. I was delighted as it was so much more than the

half a crown I had earned at Miss Blackford, he must have noticed our pleasant surprise and forthwith reduced our wages to fifteen shillings and eighteen shillings respectively. We lacked the courage to protest, even though every penny counted with our families. We two were the only wage earners. Mother very generously let me keep half a crown. We were very poor. With the Germans in Holland, Uncle Markus was, of course, unable to help us out. However, help was to come from an unexpected quarter. Because father was interned by the British government, mother received an allowance from the Assistance Board, like the wives of men in His Majesty's Prisons. She was granted forty-six shillings; our rent was twenty shillings. With my fifteen shillings we might just get by if there were no extra expenses.

At the Assistance Board, Mama found herself in strange company, but she was grateful for the money. The week after I had started to work, she came home furious. "Do you know what they've done at the Assistance Board? They deducted nearly all of your wages from my allowance." It did seem mean, and in addition it deprived me of the satisfaction that by working in a factory I was helping my family survive.

One day I forgot my sandwiches, so Mama brought them during the lunch break. She had dressed in her Sabbath coat and hat because "The Victoria Clothing Co." sounded so posh and she hadn't wanted to put me to shame. She had not bargained for the small, ramshackle, filthy place that it actually was. The walls trembled and the roof creaked with the noise of the driving belt without which there was no electricity on which to run the sewing machines. From time to time, with a spine-chilling shudder the belt slipped off the wheel-shaft which resulted in blessed silence and a few minutes' welcome work stoppage, until the manager, who was the boss's son, succeeded to pull it back into place. My first job was to stitch linings on to trouser flies. It took me a while to overcome the shrinking sensation produced by having to handle this particular part of male apparel. There were eight of us machinists.

During one lunch break a pretty but rather vapid looking girl of my own age started to complain to me, a propos of nothing in particular:

"All them Jews, stinking rich they are, the lot of 'em."

"What makes you think all Jews are rich? There are lots of poor ones, you know," I countered.

"Oh no, there ain't, our boss's a Jew and so are the bosses in all t'other factories, ever seen a Jew machinist?"

"You are talking to one right now."

She stared at me. "Don't be daft, you Jewish? Yer make me laugh."

"I am, you know,"

"No, y'er not, couldn't be, 'cos yer nose ain't long enough."

"Not all Jews have long noses, look at this," as I fished out my silver Star of David necklace -- still from Hamburg -- from under my overall.

"That don't prove nothing, you buy them at Woolworth's for a tanner a piece."

It was no use. Like the Wicked Son in the Passover Haggadah, it was useless to reason with her because she did not want her pet theory upset. But she never again discussed Jews in my hearing.

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, the shame and horror of it -- I had lice; my scalp was swarming with the itchy beasts. Mother went to our doctor with me. He prescribed a lotion to be rubbed into the scalp, and a special shampoo, the treatment to be repeated on three successive days. Early in the morning, before anyone stirred, we closeted ourselves in the bathroom and mother set to



work. She nearly scalped me alive with the special, narrow-toothed comb which completed the daily treatment. We fondly believed that we had kept everyone in ignorance of our delousing sessions, but Aunt had guessed our guilty secret. She assured mother: "There's no shame in getting lice, only in keeping them." I was careful to keep my distance from all other human beings so as not to pass on the scourge. Mother began to feel itchy too and administered the treatment to herself until our doctor told her to stop it for goodness sake, that she was itchy merely "out of sympathy," her wig would prove an impenetrable barrier to the lice. Now that we had become aware of the possibility of catching lice, we were on the look-out and thus my cousin and I noticed that one of the machinists whose mop of thick, unruly curls I had admired, kept on scratching her head. Closer, though not too close, observation showed it to be alive with a crawling mass. As we felt unable to give her secret away, we gave a week's notice. The boss offered to raise our wages by half a crown if we would agree to stay on.

However, every cloud, even a lousy one, has its silver lining. For a number of years, still back in Hamburg, I had pestered my parents for permission to cut my plaits, but they wouldn't hear of it. Now I seized my chance. Mother had to admit that long hair made delousing that much more difficult and increased the chances of becoming infected. With a fearful "What will Papa say," she reluctantly granted me permission. Straight, shoulder-length hair did not really suit me, so every night I wound it round curlers; in the morning I woke up with a headache from the pressure of the hard curlers and by mid-morning my hair was droopy and ragged looking. Next I tried winding the rolled-up leg of an old stocking round my head and tucking my hair into it, copying a girl at work. I now had a neat sausage round my head, it was not unbecoming and made me look less obviously foreign.

Before I had worked out my week's notice I had already found a new job. I earned thirty shillings a week and hoped the Assistance Board would not deduct the difference from mother's allowance. Davidson and Diamond was a slightly larger factory, cleaner and more airy, in a small hilly street off Bury New Road, near the Assizes and Strangeway Prison. They produced children's dresses, petticoats and ladies' nighties and petticoats, all rather cheap and shoddy stuff. The boss was an observant Jew, two of his daughters acted as forewomen. Hanna, the older one, was a nasty bit of goods. In the morning my watch agreed with the factory clock, but by six o'clock, when it was time to go home, mine appeared to have gained about a quarter of an hour, yet the following morning, without my having done anything about it, it was once more in accord with the factory clock. By leaning precariously out of the window one could see a huge clock on a tall building which always agreed with my watch, also at six in the evening, and that was how I managed to prove the factory clock wrong.

Her sister, Ray, was a much more likeable young woman. I suspected that she disapproved of her sister's antics. In an effort to do something for the education of us "refugee girls," Ray had organized an English class. She expected to have to teach us English from scratch, and in spite of our protestations that we all read English fluently, she brought along a children's primer. We suggested reading and then discussing the leader in the Manchester Guardian, but Ray was out of her depth and suggested some more literary text. She felt that our choice of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" ought of rights to be far beyond the grasp of new immigrants to these shores -- her parents on their arrival from Rumania, had not known a word of English and even after some thirty years in Manchester still spoke with a foreign accent. Ray had meant well, but we had not lived up

to her preconceived ideas of illiterate refugees and the lessons soon petered out. When I was in her father's employ she felt more at ease with me.

After I had been working at a sewing machine for several weeks, I was transferred to the button machine. "All the rest are too stupid to work it, but I'm sure you can." The machine stood on its own little table at some distance from the work-bench; actually, it was quite simple to operate, one simply had to make sure that the needle entered the holes in the button, otherwise it snapped. It was incredibly dull work. After I had broken half a dozen needles I was sent back to my sewing machine on the work-bench. Hannah and Ray suspected me of purposely failing to acquire the knack of the button machine in order to get out of a boring and awkward job. Ray even admired my ruse, but my failure had been perfectly genuine, due, no doubt, to my not wearing spectacles in spite of being short-sighted and astigmatic.

In the second school year my teacher noticed that I read with "my nose touching the book." Oma took me to her eye doctor. The result was a pair of round, black-framed, owlsh spectacles. The older I got the more I disliked wearing them. A few years later we had an eye test at school. We were lined up in front of a chart at the top of which was an outsize "A", this was followed by lines of increasingly smaller letters. I took careful note how far down the line the girls with perfect eyesight managed to read the letters without difficulty, at which line they began to hesitate and where they finally gave up any attempt at making them out. When it was my turn, the school nurse was delighted with the fantastic improvement of my eyesight. The fact that even with strenuous squinting I was mostly unable to read what was written on the blackboard in arithmetic lessons I deemed a small price to pay for my liberation from the hateful spectacles.



Davidson and Diamond accepted more orders than they could handle, and as it was almost impossible to find and hire additional workers they decided to put us on piecework which was an incentive to work harder. We machinists were supposed to produce a minimum number of garments a day -- no point in exerting oneself to sew up more than the quota. Piecework meant that we would be paid extra for every dozen garments -- vests, nightgowns, etc. -- we produced above the daily quota. At the end of every day I made a note of the extra money I had earned, and by pay day I was greatly looking forward to a hard earned additional seven shillings and sixpence. On Friday when I opened my pay packet I found that I was two shillings and sixpence short. Maybe my adding up was at fault; after all, arithmetic had been my weakest subject at school. At home, I checked and rechecked, there was no mistake. I nerved myself for a confrontation with Hanna.

"I think there's a mistake in my wages."

"Impossible, It's me who makes up the wages and I've never, ever yet made a mistake."

"But I can prove it to you."

Hanna was fast losing her patience. "You can do nothing of the sort, go back to your machine, you're wasting my time and yours with this nonsense."

I stood my ground

"Heard what I said?"

I did not reply. Then, with a weary sigh as though humouring a silly child:

"Oh, all right then, Betty, to put your mind at rest, we'll go over your and my account and I'll show you where you've gone wrong and that'll put a stop to this nonsense once and for all."

I spread out my account. She scrutinized it carefully.

"My, aren't we good at arithmetic!" as with a flourish she handed me a shiny half a crown.

"Thank you. One needs to be in this place," I laughed inwardly, gratefully remembering my best hated subject at school.

It amazed me that none of the other machinists ever bothered to check their wage packets. They were pleasant and good natured women and girls. Annie Green was a gentle, soft spoken woman whose husband was on active service in the Navy. Annie felt that she ought to do something for my national integration and towards this end she taught me the words of "Land of Hope and Glory, Mother of the Free," the tune of which I already knew. I was in whole-hearted agreement with its sentiments. We often walked home together for part of the way. One evening she confided to me:

"I don't really have to go out to work, but sitting at home by myself all day long with nothing to do but worry myself sick over Bill would drive me barmy in no time."

I wanted to repay her confidence in me by giving her a piece of advice:

"Even if you don't depend on your wages for your living, you ought to go over your wage packet and make sure you aren't being diddled."

She squeezed my arm and sighed: "I'd rather be a few pennies short than face that bitchy Hannah, I haven't the gumption -- none of us, not even that foul-mouthed Mary -- and Hannah knows it."

Our ways parted at the corner of Bury New Road and Great Cheetham Street. Annie lived in a mean, slummy street off Leicester Road. If I was her, I'd save up every penny and move out of that depressing street. I walked along in the black-out planning a hero's welcome for Bill. I almost collided with a tall man who stood blocking my way. "How about a bit of this?" he leered, as he pulled something horrid and creaking from his trouser fly. I squeezed

past him and sped away, to my surprise and intense relief he rushed off in the opposite direction. Shivering with fear and disgust, I was never so happy to see our front door. Mother greeted me with a delighted face and pushed an official looking letter into my hands. "Remember all the letters I wrote for Beni's release?" Yes, I remembered very well, we had sat and sweated over their composition for many an hour, though of late David, the eldest son of our landlord had come to our aid and improved their style. The following is one such letter:

|                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
|                               | 1 Wellington Street West, |
| The Under-Secretary of State, | Salford 7                 |
| Aliens Dept., <u>London</u>   | 28th. August 1940         |

Dear Sir,

I beg to apply for the release of my son Beni Emanuel, born 29th April 1923, now interned in Huyton.

As a young person resident prior to internment with me, his mother (at 402, Bury New Road, Salford) my son is eligible for release under category 2 of the White Paper. (Because my brother was under eighteen.)

We arrived in England on 21st April 1939, and proceeded to Cardiff, where my son enjoyed the privilege which he highly appreciated of English education. He bears a burden of deep gratitude to this country that has given us shelter from the enemies of humanity, and a boy of deep feeling and noble character, he will be an asset to the state.

On Cardiff being declared a defence area we moved to Manchester, where both my dear husband and son were interned on 25th June 1940.



I make no complaint about any measures necessary for the safety of the country, but was of course happy to learn that my son will be eligible for release, and I accordingly make this respectful application for him to be allowed to return to my care. I have now received a telegram that my interned husband has been removed to hospital. I hope that my feeling will be understood when I plead for my son to be released as soon as possible. I enclose three testimonials and confidently await your kind decision.

May I tender my most inadequate thanks to your office to whose human agency we owe our lives.

Yours respectfully,

Rosi Emanuel

And this was the reply:

Home Office,  
P.O. Box No. 100,  
Paddington District Office,  
London, W.2.  
1st October, 1940.

Madam,

With reference to your letter undated regarding the internment of Mr. Beni Emanuel, I am directed by the Secretary of State to inform you that instructions have now been given for Mr. Emanuel's release.

I am, Madam

Your obedient Servant,

Mrs. R. Emanuel,  
1, Wellington Street, West,  
Salford, 7  
Manchester.

Beni had positively enjoyed some aspects of life in the Internment Camp. At seventeen years of age, it was a liberating experience to be away from constant parental vigilance. Then, there was the stimulation of attending lectures by famous intellectuals on a variety of subjects. He even started to learn Arabic from a young scholar -- who, twelve years later, became my husband. As there were no exercise books, not even letter paper, he wrote the Arabic alphabet on toilet paper. There was no writing paper because the internees had to write their letters on special paper, immune to secret writing techniques. The manufacturer of this special paper, a Jewish refugee, was released from the Internment Camp so that production of the paper could continue.

Daddy, too, led a busy life. In addition to his work in the Kosher kitchen, he gave numerous lessons in Jewish studies. His class on the Ethics of the Fathers was attended by a former judge from Berlin, a completely assimilated Jew who knew nothing of Judaism. He became a great admirer of Daddy!

Chapter 10

Father had lost a great deal of weight and since he was thin to start with, he must now look like a walking skeleton. The Internment Camp authorities had him transferred to near-by Prescot County Hospital at Whiston, where he had thirteen X-rays taken. They were all of them negative. Worrying yourself sick over the fate of your family, destitute in a strange city, does not show up on X-rays. The doctor recognized the nature of his "illness," but was unable to release him on the strength of his diagnosis, because worry was not an officially recognized disease.

Mother decided to write directly to Major Kirkland, the military registrar at the hospital, pleading Daddy's case. Since this was the kind of letter where any mistake in English could prove fatal, she again turned to David, our landlord's son who was always willing to oblige her by penning official letters. Mama explained exactly what was needed and he produced a perfectly worded letter which she copied on our typewriter. An answer arrived from Major Kirkland, polite but noncommittal. Daddy was sent back to Huyton, behind barbed wire.

Everyone feared that Germany was about to attempt an invasion of Britain, but we had an additional reason for alarm. We shuddered to think of the fate in store for all the German Jews so conveniently concentrated in the camps, to be handed over to the German invaders to do their diabolical worst. Afraid of collaboration between members of the Fifth Column among the internees and the imminent German invaders, the British government decided on the immediate deportation of the internees to Canada and Australia. Aunt and Uncle's two older boys were shipped off to Australia; Uncle decided to send the youngest one along with them -- except that his boat went to Canada. We were worried that Beni too would be sent



overseas, even though his release had been promised. Daddy advised him to volunteer for work in the kitchen which would make deportation less likely. It was not only that we hated the idea of losing Beni, even more we feared the hazardous crossing of mined seas. One boat carrying German Nazis and Jewish refugees had struck a mine; having been locked up in the hold, the prisoners had all drowned.

An internee was released if he was able to produce evidence of an immediate emigration possibility. Once again mother wrote to our relatives in the United States. The replies were not encouraging. The kind and helpful people usually lacked the means to offer the necessary guarantee and then there was still the very considerable expense of the sea passage for the seven of us. Once there, our relatives assured us, we would be a great deal better off than here. For one thing, we'd have escaped the "witches' cauldron," as they called Europe, and in the States we would be permitted to accept any kind of employment and earn sufficient for our keep. The problem was getting to that Land of Golden Opportunities. one of Mummy's cousins suggested sending us children, that is to say, me and the three younger ones, so as to get us away from the bombing. The evacuation of children from Britain was being organized, and she, her husband and two children would be happy to have us stay with them. Mother wrote, thanking her for the generous offer: "As you know from your own experience, the Germans robbed us of all our material possessions, and like you we had the great good fortune not to have had to part with our greatest treasure, and we shall not do so now. Besides, how will Isskar feel when at last he returns from the internment camp and finds the house empty?"

On the 26th of August a telegram arrived from Prescott: "Ask Home Office For Visit Here -- Isskar." Mother wrote to the Aliens' Department of the Home Office and a permit arrived for her to visit father -- for Saturday 7th of September. Once again David was pressed

into service to compose a letter expressing mother's grateful feelings and sincere thanks, and requesting that the day be changed since, as an orthodox Jewess, she cannot travel on a Saturday. In due course a new permit arrived -- for the 12th of October which was not only a Saturday, but also the Day of Atonement, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. Once more, ever helpful David came to her assistance. Mother suggested alternative dates and made an additional request: "And may my daughter Betty, fifteen years of age, accompany me to see her father whom she has not seen for months." A new permit arrived which also included me. Now an application had to be made for permission to enter a Protected Area since that was where the Huyton Internment Camp was situated, and which was normally forbidden to enemy aliens. This permission too was granted, and on the 15th of October Mummy and I took the train for Huyton near Liverpool. It was a glorious autumn day on which I found myself outside the factory gate. On my way to work it was still dark and on the way home it was dark again. My feeling of exhilaration gave way to sadness when at journey's end we stood facing a seemingly endless barbed wire fence with a high watch tower at one corner and perched inside it an armed soldier, like a bird of prey. We showed our pass at the gate in the fence and were conducted inside to a Nissen hut where prisoners received their visitors.

How good it was to hug and kiss Daddy. I had prepared him for the change in my appearance, so it did not come as a shock to him to see me minus my plaits. Mr. Cohn, who had founded a branch of the Ezra youth movement back in Cardiff, walked into the hut carrying a tray with four cups of coffee. After he had sat with us for quite a while a sergeant barked: "Are these your visitors? I think not." He reluctantly left the hut. I felt sorry for his hang-dog look, but pleased that we had Daddy to ourselves for the remaining time -- which passed all too quickly. Our permission had come in the nick of time because on the following day the camp was being moved to the Isle of Man -- quite out of our reach. Once again I

would be unable to picture father in his surroundings, but I consoled myself with the thought that he would be far away from the frequent and heavy air-raids that were pounding Liverpool and its neighbourhood. He told us that at the hospital the regulations stipulated that during air-raids the patients able to get up were to lie underneath their beds. "But if I have to die, I prefer to do so in bed rather than under it. And since it was pitch dark, no one was any the wiser."

Father and mother discussed each one of us children, their progress at school, their conduct at home and the friends they had made. I almost burst with pride at Mama's rare praise:

"Betty is a real help and support and I don't only mean with her wages. I discuss many of my problems with her. She's mature beyond her young years."

"And how's she around the house?" Father's steely grey eyes were fixed on me rather than on mother.

"In the evenings she either washes or dries the dinner dishes, on Sundays she cleans her and Gitta's room and she does the ironing for the whole family."

"I'm glad to hear it."

When it was time for us to go father accompanied us as far as the barbed wire fence. Good-bye kisses hurt and taste sad. From the other side of the fence I stuck my forefinger through the wire mesh for him to grasp, just like Hansel, only there wasn't a witch on the other side, but my beloved father. Mama and I were free, but instead I felt locked out.

On the 10th of November -- a date I shall not forget as long as I live because of what happened to German Jewry on that day two years earlier -- a letter arrived from the secretary of The Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council for German, Austrian and Czechoslovakian Jewry." Mother had made several appeals to this body, asking for its help



in securing father's release. In August she had received a rather discouraging letter, but today's made us tread on air:

"Dear Mrs. Emanuel,

With regard to the release of your husband, I am informing you, but confidentially, that we are including him in a list of a few Rabbis and teachers on whose behalf we are again approaching the Home Office. (Please do not talk about this to anybody, as we cannot consider new applications.)

Best regards!

Yours sincerely

(H. Pels)

Secretary

Besides wanting Daddy's release for his own sake, he was badly needed at home to counteract Uncle who played the big boss around the house, since his recent release. He even dared tell Mummy -- in our hearing -- that she doesn't know how to bring us up because when he hit Raphael who had cheeked him, and Beni said that he had bloody well no right to hit Raphael, mother had not told Beni off. I bet she fully agreed with Beni's sentiments, even if not with his way of expressing them. I felt sorry for Aunt who looked broken hearted when she thought herself unobserved, but in front of people she pretended to be happy to have her three boys overseas. "How clever of my husband to have got them away from this accursed continent. Of course, I miss them, but I'm happy to know them safe from the bombs." The youngest boy returned from Canada still during the war, but she was not to see the two older ones again until shortly before her death when she visited them in Melbourne.

It was always a Red Letter Day when we heard from Oma. However, the censor had got wise to our method of sending letters via her sister in the States, and he enclosed a printed notification: "Notes for persons wishing to communicate with friends in Enemy Countries or Territory in the Occupation of the Enemy. Short letters can be sent via Thomas Cook. No reference must be made to any town, village, locality or journey in Great Britain nor, quite obviously, to any phase of the war." This was a considerable improvement on the twenty word maximum Red Cross communication, typed on an official form which made it cold and impersonal. Oma wrote lovely letters with a special paragraph to each one of us children; the one to Raphael she printed for she surmised correctly that he had not yet learnt cursive script, except that she failed to realize that he did not read German but English. A paragraph addressed to me made me feel both sad and proud: "A few days ago my room-mate said to me, 'have you got a granddaughter called Betty?' 'Yes,' I said, 'why?' 'Last night you repeatedly called Betty.' So you see that even in my sleep I think of you."

It was several months since we last heard from Uncle Markus and family in Holland and from Fanny and Isi in Denmark. On the other hand, I received a letter with an American stamp, addressed in the round, unmistakable handwriting of my goodie-goodie friend Miriam. The whole family had succeeded to escape to the United States just before that country entered the war. They live in a slummy part of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York, have so far only managed to obtain very badly paid, but extremely hard work, but don't mind, the main thing was to have got out of Germany. It was good to know them safe. So many of our family, friends, teachers and classmates are hopelessly trapped.

We still missed our Cardiff friends. Ruth and I corresponded somewhat sporadically. Miss Myerson, the Jewish teacher at Marlborough Road School, wrote for the Jewish New Year and enclosed a one pound note, asking mother to buy something for us children. Also

dear Mrs. Cohen wrote every now and then. It was strange that even though we'd had a hard time of it in Cardiff, in retrospect our year there looked like one long picnic. But I was still upset that the City of Cardiff Education Committee never sent me my book prize even though I had informed them of my new address -- maybe they didn't feel like giving a present to a German national.

Slowly we started to make new friends. There was a very likeable family from Frankfurt-on-Main, blessed with four daughters -- Edith and Ruth, the two older ones were a few years older than I. We first met at our synagogue, though this is really a misnomer. Our congregation consisted almost purely of German Jews, services were held in two rooms put at our disposal in the Aguda House on the corner of Bury New Road and Northumberland Street. Agudat Yisrael is the religious organization of which father had been president in the Hamburg branch. Edith, Ruth and I also attended a Bible class given there to a group of us refugee girls by an English-Jewish teacher of East-European descent. In the course of one lesson he complained:

"Just look at the way you German Jews pray, there's deathly silence except for the cantor's voice and you stand or sit as if your feet were nailed to the floor, even your children behave like adults -- it's unnatural. Our children, on the other hand, feel at home in the synagogue and happily jump on tables and chairs -- our services are alive!"

One of our girls stood up, gave him a withering look and with disdain in her voice declared: "But then, our children don't jump on tables and chairs at home either."

We were delighted with her quick and telling retort. None of us could stand the undignified services at the synagogue which our teacher and many first and even second generation "native" Jews attended, their kids were completely undisciplined and ran around the whole time, though we had never actually seen any of them jump on tables or chairs. The



adults didn't restrain them, they tended to chat, especially during the long readings from the Pentateuch and Prophets. There was always silence, however, when a mourner who had lost a close relative recited the Kaddish, a special prayer in praise of the Almighty. This must have played on Beni's imagination. As a young boy one of his favourite games had been to play at synagogue; the living-room chairs were arranged in rows and any of us children he was able to conscript formed the congregation while he acted the cantor. His performance invariably ended in a lugubrious recital of the Kaddish -- until Oma complained to my parents:

"Can't you stop Beni from always saying Kaddish?"

"Why, what harm is there in it?" father wanted to know.

"It just isn't right," was all she could say.

Beni was told to respect Oma's wishes. I knew just how she felt; Oma was a very old lady and the Kaddish cut too close to the bone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Under normal circumstances father would have led the congregation in the Kol Nidrei, the evening service which inaugurates the Day of Atonement, but father was still interned. Uncle decided that he was going to conduct the service. Prayers were then held in private houses because our Aguda House premises had been bombed and we had not yet found alternative accommodation. Uncle's rendering of the grand Kol Nidrei was a travesty, he mispronounced the Hebrew and was unable to recall the different melodies. We Emanuels were much better trained. When he got stuck I itched to help him out and start him off on the correct tune, but I knew better. He wouldn't have taken kindly to assistance from anyone,

least of all from an Emanuel and a girl at that. So I kept mum and squirmed in my seat. When it seemed that he was stuck for good one of my brothers unobtrusively helped him along. In other years mother, father and we children had walked home spiritually uplifted, united in the hope that the Almighty would surely listen to our heart-felt prayers and grant us forgiveness for the trespasses we fervently intended should never happen again. On this evening we also walked home quietly, but there was no uplift and no solemn joy, just sadness at Daddy's absence and a feeling of having been cheated out of a religious experience. I've often wondered at the reason for the unique position this prayer enjoys. Is it due to the fact that it inaugurates the most awesome day of the year? The synagogue is decked out in white; in place of the usual coloured velvet curtain, a white one hangs in front of the ark that contains the scrolls of the Law, which are dressed in white mantels, and the desks on which our prayer books lie are also covered with a white cloth. The men wear a white skullcap, and a white shroud over their suit -- to remind us of man's mortality -- while the women wear white dresses or at least a white blouse and the married ones a white hat or kerchief. The music of the opening prayer, after which the whole service is called, the Kol Nidrei, is grandiose, yet to my way of thinking it hardly deserves all that splendour dealing, as it does, with a plea to have all the vows and promises annulled which one may have made to the Almighty and not kept. Would not a quiet and humble approach be more suitable to the occasion? The prayers which follow this grand opening are much more beautiful and poetic, yet much less famous. There I go again, criticising generations of my elders and betters -- and on the Day of Atonement at that, which I ought to utilize for some soul searching.

Instead, the bitter realization wells up that I, as a woman, am considered an irresponsible and weak vessel whose vows, unlike those of a man, can be annulled by male members of my family, by my father as long as I am unmarried and afterwards by my

husband. I wonder what the law is as regards an old spinster whose father is no longer alive; who is her authority then for annulling vows? A spinster is pitied; in contrast to a bachelor, she is believed to be unmarried not from choice, but from lack of opportunity. A bachelor, on the other hand, is considered to be wilfully transgressing the first Divine commandment given to man: "Be fruitful and multiply." It is therefore a meritorious act to arrange marriages and to collect dowries for needy brides. Aunt proudly showed me a large yellow glass bowl which a young couple had presented to her as a token of their gratitude for having introduced them to each other. Aunt was a pretty woman with apple-red cheeks, bright blue eyes and charming manner. Sad to say, her looks belied her nature and if I had not myself witnessed her mean and cruel conduct towards my parents I would never have thought her capable of it. But, thank God, all that was past and done with.

Daddy was home at last, and our tormentors had moved to a house not far from us -- how good it felt to be by ourselves -- no doubt, they were equally happy to be by themselves. Now there was sufficient space for everyone and everything. Downstairs were two front-rooms, one on either side of the front door -- as a matter of fact, all the rooms faced the street for the house had no depth, only length. Gitta and I slept in the larger one and in the other, which was easier to heat, we ate our meals on the Sabbath and festivals and there we also received our visitors. The kitchen was the real centre of activity, particularly in winter because coal rationing limited us to one fire. The kitchen led to a small scullery where the cooking and washing up were done. Fourteen steps up were the boys' room where Beni and Jacob slept -- and which had been bug-ridden when we moved in -- and the bathroom cum lavatory. One step up, and along the passage were the parental bedroom and Uncle and Aunt's bedroom when we lived together; it had been made over to Raphael after he had quarrelled with Beni and Jacob -- he thoroughly enjoyed his splendid isolation. Up another



fifteen stairs was the attic where the water pipes gurgled merrily and where we stored cardboard boxes filled with clothes too small for the last incumbent and waiting for the next one to grow into; there was an old pram and also thick files with old letters, and all the odds and ends which one hasn't the heart to throw out because they might come in useful one day -- they never do, though the files were an exception to this rule, proving a mine of information and providing precise documentation in writing this book.

Once more, we were starting to settle down. Father had found work with a firm that manufactured margarine and artificial cream. His domain was a dark, dank cellar grandly called a store-room, where he had to carry heavy sacks filled with the powdery stuff -- the main ingredient of the cream -- from one place to another. He ruined his clothes and was on the best way to ruining his health. He worked there all alone, his only company was a kitten, a friendly creature that lived on amicable terms with an army of mice. Under the circumstances it was odd that father should have objected so violently to the idea of our keeping a cat at home.

Mama found it well-nigh impossible to go to bed before one or two o'clock a.m., consequently she was unable to get up at a reasonable hour in the morning. After everyone else had long since retired she happily mended socks or got lost in a novel until she was too tired to make the effort to go upstairs to bed. Where even authoritarian father had failed, a few cheeky little mice succeeded. They only appeared in the wee hours when all was quiet and they thought they had the kitchen to themselves. They made Mama retire with the last member of the family. This was usually Beni -- he must have inherited his energy cycle from mother, for he too found it hard to get up in the mornings, while Daddy and Jacob effortlessly rose with the birds. This happy state of affairs did not last long; a rodent exterminator was summoned. He was an acquaintance of my parents; in Hamburg he had fumigated the large

ocean liners. For a week or two Mama was able to revert to her former bat habit -- until a little mouse sent her scuttling upstairs again. The exterminator was summoned once more.

"It's really against my business interests," he told us, "but my advice to you is to get a cat. You've got dirty neighbours and even if I were to come regularly once a fortnight to put down poison, it still wouldn't rid you of the mice."

After he had gone we discussed his proposal. We children were all in favour of adding a cat to our family. Mother didn't think she'd fancy having a cat around the house, but it was preferable to mice. Father was dead against it:

"It's either me or a cat in this house," he declared, certain of victory.

"A cat," we sang out in unison.

Pussy was an ingratiating little darling. A few weeks after her arrival I caught father surreptitiously stroking her when he thought no one was looking. None of us, not even mother, sat on father's special chair; this was his comfortable bentwood desk chair -- the desk had stayed behind in Hamburg. When Pussy occupied this chair, father sat on another one.

\* \* \* \* \*

As we were sitting round the breakfast table in the front-room on a Sabbath morning, having worked up a good appetite from the long synagogue service and the walk home in the wintry cold, the door bell rang. Who could it be? Observant Jews don't ring the bell on a Sabbath, instead they knock. A middle-aged woman with a head of flaming red hair stood at the door.

"I'm Mrs. Hopper from the lane opposite," she introduced herself. "I know you are religious Jews and mustn't light a fire or put on the electric light today, so I meant to ask if I could do any of those jobs for you."

"It's really very kind of you, Mrs. Hopper," Mama thanked her. "But young John from around the corner lit the fire for us early this morning and we have an electric time switch that turns the lights on and off, but thank you just the same."

Mrs. Hopper came again the following Saturday morning offering us her help. On the third occasion Mama gave her a packet of tea, a precious gift for English people, since unlike us Continentals they drank no coffee which was unrationed, while tea was, so that they were chronically short of this commodity, especially as they liked a strong, dark brew which was then diluted with cold milk. One day mother asked Mrs. Hopper:

"You mustn't think we don't appreciate your kindness, but do tell me, what made you offer your help to complete strangers?"

"That's quite simple, Mrs. Emanuel."

Mother looked puzzled.

"You are foreigners, Germans in fact. Germany is at war with England. Like you I hate the English -- I'm Irish, you know."

Mother thought she hadn't heard right. Of course, the Welsh did not exactly love the English, but there wasn't this burning hatred. Mrs. Hopper's son was in the RAF and her eldest daughter served in the ATS. If they hated the English so badly, why had they made their home in England, why didn't they go back to Ireland? After all, they did have a country to go back to. Mother shook her head:

"You've got it all wrong, Mrs. Hopper. We detest the Germans even more than the English do, and we are grateful to England for having granted us asylum."



Mrs. Hopper did not bear us a grudge for liking the English, but continued to offer her help on the Sabbath and also came to discuss her family problems with my mother. Mama felt that she could not offer Mrs. Hopper money for her help and therefore preferred that of young John from around the corner in Rudyard Street -- the continuation of which was called Kipling Street. John was a sturdy youngster with a mop of unruly straw-blond hair and a nose that turned heavenwards in a freckled face. One Saturday morning as he was lighting the fire in the front room, he told me excitedly:

"On Monday I'm sittin' for me scholarship."

The following Saturday I asked him how he thought he had done.

"Arright Ah think." He didn't sound a bit elated.

"But that's wonderful. Then you'll be going to Salford Grammar next September."

"Nope."

"No, why not?"

"Me dad said, 'if you go to grammar school yer won't be me pal no more'."

"Don't you want to go very much?"

"Ah don't know."

I was all for going on a crusade and having it out with John's father, but my parents advised strongly against it:

"John's father's a drunk and his mother a loud-mouthed slut -- curses is all you'd get for your pains."

John never did go to grammar school.

Around another corner, in Great Clowes Street, a tall, old-fashioned building housed the Mercaz Limmud. This was the Study Centre of Bachad, the Labour faction of the Religious Zionist Organization, the Mizrachi. On a number of training farms in different parts of Britain -- there used to be such farms also on the Continent -- young Jews, mainly refugees from Germany and Austria, worked as agricultural labourers in preparation for their future life on a Kibbutz, the communal settlements in Palestine. Britain's policy which limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to a trickle forced them to postpone the implementation of their aspiration for many a year.

Agriculture was not considered merely an occupation, but a way of life, as an instrument to fashion a modern, new Jew and at the same time as a means of redeeming the soil of our land, eroded through centuries of neglect by the different invaders who had come to take possession of the country. By the sweat of their brow and with modern farming methods, these young Jews would contribute their share in turning it once more into a "land flowing with milk and honey." The members of the Mizrachi differed from the General Zionist Organization by their observance of Jewish religious law. The Mercaz Limmud in Manchester gave the boys and girls on the training farms, many of whom would still have been at school under normal circumstances, the opportunity to devote a few months to the study of their Jewish heritage, to acquire a knowledge of spoken Hebrew and to think about and discuss their ideas and ideals of self-fulfillment as religious Zionist pioneers. The matron was a young woman from Germany who later on married a Palestinian soldier on leave in Britain, a volunteer in the Jewish Brigade which as part of the Eighth Army served in Italy and on the Italo-Austrian-Yugoslav border. The principal was an exceptionally intelligent and mature teacher in his middle twenties. In addition to his training at a Jewish Teachers' Seminary in Germany he had also spent several years in Lithuania at a famous Yeshivah, a

Jewish traditional school devoted primarily to the study of the Talmud. Eva, the eldest daughter of our Hamburg Chief Rabbi, Dr. Joseph Carlebach, was also on the staff of the Mercaz. After the war these two married. Her parents could have left Germany. Jewish communities abroad had invited the famous rabbi to become their spiritual head, but he had refused these offers: "A shepherd does not abandon his flock," he maintained. "As long as my congregants need me, I shall remain with them." The five older children had been sent to safety, but the four younger ones had remained behind in Hamburg with their parents.

Even though German was the mother tongue of the students and staff at the Mercaz, the lessons were given in English. The imperfect knowledge of that language occasionally produced weird and wonderful statements, such as: "One must not wear anything on the Sabbath." The teacher had intended to say that one must not carry anything on the Sabbath, the German word "tragen" meaning both to wear and to carry.

Until they had a Torah scroll at their disposal they held services at our house on the weekdays when these included readings from the Torah. We were pleased that the Scroll we had taken with us to safety from our synagogue in Hamburg was being put to good use.

One might have thought that my parents would approve whole-heartedly of the hard-working, modest, idealistic and religiously observant life style of these young members of the Mizrachi Movement. But this was not quite so. On a week-end visit to us from his training farm, father said disapprovingly to our cousin Baruch: "What would your father say if he knew that you belong to the Mizrachi?" Baruch forbore to reply. I was shocked. Here was Baruch, a boy of seventeen, alone in a strange country. His two older sisters lived in Palestine, his parents and youngest sister had not succeeded in leaving Hamburg. Like us, Baruch meticulously observed all religious precepts and even on the farm he made it his



business to enlarge his Jewish knowledge. What was it then that had prompted father's criticism?

My parents' negative attitude was really directed at the Mizrachi Organization as such. In the view of the Agudah, the Mizrachists tended to be weak-kneed under political and social pressure. The Mizrachi flirted and even cooperated with the non-religious General Zionist Movement. They were a bit slack in some religious observances, thus few of their married women wore wigs, some covered their heads with a kerchief which generally did not completely hide the hair, and many women did not cover their hair at all. Who knows where such laxity might not lead? Yet my parents did not discourage Beni and me from attending lessons and joining in the Hebrew sing-songs at the Mercaz Limmud, they even invited some of the young people to our house. They were certain that our upbringing had made us immune to any possible negative Mizrachi influence.

We often had guests at our Sabbath meals because my parents liked to invite young people who had come to Britain on their own and were missing family life. Their presence added a fillip to the table talk and prevented bickering among us children. A stimulating discussion was suddenly interrupted by a thud in the grate, a lump of soot had dropped down the chimney, landing on the small tiled hearth where it disintegrated. Mama jumped up, left the room and returned with a dustpan and brush.

"And to think that it's only a couple of weeks since we had the chimney sweep. For the money he got he ought to have made a better job of cleaning the chimney."

Mother left the room with the dustpan full of soot. It did not take long before another lot of soot descended on to the tiles. Some of us children got up to fetch the dustpan and brush.

"No, let me go," she insisted, "I'll make a proper job of it this time."

Mama knelt on the tiles, pushing the brush up as far as she could reach. She dropped the brush and screamed with fright as a coal-black object shot out, missing her face by less than an inch; it flew across the room, langing on top of a large picture.

"Had it been winter," one of my brothers joked, "we'd have roast pigeon for dinner."

"How lucky it's summer," Gitta sighed with relief. "And how lucky it didn't break its wings falling through the chimney."

The pigeon remained sitting motionless on top of the picture. After breakfast father announced: "And now I'll send it on its way," as with purposeful but measured steps, so as not to frighten the bird, he walked up to the picture, reached up and carefully lifted the large picture off its hook. Triumphantly he bore his burden as far as the door, when -- whoosh -- the bird flew off the picture, fluttered undecidedly around the room until it decided to make its next resting place precisely in the centre of the roof of the wooden wall clock whose pleasant half-hourly chimes formed an integral part of my life in the parental home. We placed a dish with milk-soaked bread cubes near the pigeon, we opened the window and pushed the lace curtain to one side, but our visitor ignored both the food and its escape route. It looked decidedly ornamental on top of the clock.

In the early afternoon Gitta's friend, Esther, came for a visit. Seeing the open, uncurtained window she stuck her head into the room while from inside the room Gitta started to tell her about our latest addition to the family. Esther outdid even Mother; her blood-curdling scream rent the peaceful Sabbath air of the neighbourhood, for the pigeon had decided that the moment of parting had come and swooped past Esther's head out of the window and so to freedom.

"Why didn't you warn me?" she implored as we were bent double with laughter.

"I was just going to," Gitta said when she had recovered sufficiently to reply, "when the bird exited."

Poor Esther, we had behaved very badly, and I'm afraid that was not the only instance that we offended our visitors with our hilarity.

There was a widower, a large, beefy man with a voice to match his size, whose hobby, like father's, was to conduct synagogue services. At the end of the Sabbath meal father honoured him by offering him to recite Grace After Meals. The man's booming voice reverberated round the walls of our small diningroom. He got quite carried away by his performance, his eyes turned heavenwards, his large head bobbed up and down, up and down, his several chins wobbled rhythmically. To look at him was fatal so I quickly lowered my head and stared at the floor, racking my brain to think of something sad. It should have been easy, but my mind was a blank. A giggle that turned into a nasty cough made me look up, straight into Gitta's convulsed face. I too succumbed. A few moments later all five of us children squirmed in our chairs. Father and mother looked at us disapprovingly, we were in for trouble. If only we could get our parents to join in the laughter they would not be in a position to tell us off. I almost succeeded with Mama, but just as I managed to catch her eye she hastily turned her face away. Had our guest noticed the commotion? Seemingly unconcerned he carried on with his performance. Before his next visit we begged of father:

"Please don't ask him to recite the Grace."

"I would be lacking in my duty as host, and if I and Mama can control ourselves, you can too," and he then added quite illogically: "besides, there's nothing to laugh about."

On his next visit he declined father's offer to recite the Grace:

"I like to see children happy, but I do not like to be the butt of their mirth." We felt awful.



\* \* \* \* \*

One Sunday afternoon a former class mate of mother's visited us with her husband. It was many years since they had last met, for back in Hamburg they had moved in different circles, but in Manchester they greeted each other like long lost friends. We made coffee and offered the visitors mother's Sabbath cake. The husband accepted a slice, but his wife shook her head. Then, seeing his obvious enjoyment she hesitantly helped herself to the smallest one on the plate, bit off a piece, chewed, and looking at mother said with genuine surprise:

"Not at all bad, Rosi!"

We were scandalized and Jacob burst out: "It's very good, Mama's cake always is."

The woman was confused and embarrassed. Mother came to her rescue:

"As a girl I wasn't a bit interested in anything to do with cooking or baking. In fact I was known as a blue-stocking," and turning to her former school mate, "so it's no wonder you hesitated. As you see, I've come a long way since those days. I jolly well had to, you know."

"Not at all bad, Rosi," was added to our list of favourite sayings.

Chapter 11

Every Monday morning, since Mama had learnt from other refugee friends about the municipal wash-house, she trundled an old pram piled high with a bundle of our dirty laundry to Elizabeth Street in Hightown, a thirty-minute walk from home. Sam, the attendant allocated her a machine for which she had paid the previous Monday. When he was in a good mood he carried her bundle to the washing machine.

"Why d'you do this for me?"

"Because I wouldn't want my own mother to be here," was his reply.

The white wash went into the machine first and when it came out the coloured things followed. At some distance from the machines stood a row of sinks with wooden boards attached where woollen socks and dainty clothes not suitable for the machine were hand washed. When the machine had completed the washing and rinsing cycle Mama transferred the dripping laundry to a basket which she dragged to the whizzers that squeezed out most of the water. There were not enough of these whizzers so that there was usually a row of baskets waiting for their turn. Noisy altercations broke out when a woman was accused of pushing her own basket ahead of others. On one occasion a friendly soul pushed Mama's basket back into its place, telling her:

"You mustn't let 'em get away with it, love."

"I've tried, but I can't shout back at them, my English isn't good enough for that."

"You must learn to stand up to them otherwise they'll just shove you around."

Once the machine wash was in the whizzer, it was back to the sink to finish the hand wash, then Mama hurried on the wet, slippery floor to the whizzer in order to take out her load. One week a woman told her:

"You don't mind, do yer, I took your wash out when t'whizzer stopped, you was late, see, so I put mine in, there's yours all ready in t'basket."

This was against the rules, but what could Mama do? Next she pulled the basket to the rows of drying racks to hang her laundry on the three racks she had paid for. Since they were hers for a certain time only, the quicker she got it on the racks, the drier she would take her laundry home. She looked at the empty basket, she had a feeling something was missing. She always kept her eyes "skinned" since thieving was a major problem. Of course -- the woman who had emptied her whizzer.

"Excuse me, did you happen to see my daughter's red blouse when you took my things out of the whizzer?"

"You stand there an' accuse me of stealing yer bleeding blouse?"

"Of course not, I only thought it might have dropped . . ."

"Yer thought, did yer? Don't yer bloody well think, missus, otherwise I'll give yer something ter think about."

Mother was even more upset than I that the blouse for which I had saved up many weeks, was gone. For a long time, like a bull, her eyes were immediately drawn to any red garment, but even if she were to discover my blouse, what would it have helped her? How could she prove ownership? And anyway, she was no match for that aggressive, foul-mouthed woman. Only shouting was audible above the constant rattling noise of the machines. The hiss of steam, the clanging and banging of the drying racks being opened and shut, the clatter of metal buckets, the raucous screaming of the women -- the heat, the steam, the noise -- it was like an inferno.

Home again, with the week's washing done and nothing missing, her aching feet soaking in a bowl of warm water with a pinch of salt, a scalding, strong cup of coffee at her



lips, Mama felt happy, if worn out. The wash-house was her way of participating in the hard life we were living. Besides, doing the washing at home meant stoking up the fire in the kitchen grate to get sufficient hot water. It made the room unbearably hot in summer and was hard on our coal ration. Nor was drying the laundry a simple matter. Not much could be hung on the line above the bathtub. Weather permitting, Mama hang it out in relays in the small back yard, but the air was so grimy from the smoking factory chimneys that specks of soot fell on father's and the boys' white shirts invariably where it showed. When there was no breeze the laundry would not dry and when there was one, the garments were blown against the blackened wooden fence. Washing and drying used to go on practically all week long, with a clothes' horse steaming in front of the living-kitchen fire. Therefore, with all its disadvantages, the municipal wash-house was still an improvement.

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Papa had moved on from margarine and artificial cream to pickled herrings and cucumbers, from a dank cellar to a bright building, and from the company of a cat to that of a bunch of jolly rough-and-ready women. Once again, Papa was in charge of the store-room, he was also to watch that no products were stolen and generally to lend a hand wherever it was needed. His weekly wage was slightly higher than the starvation pay at his former place of work -- though we children did not know how much -- or how little -- he was actually paid at either place. He wore an overall, but even so an overpowering smell of pickled herring stubbornly clung to him. He changed his clothes the minute he got home. The working suit hung outside the wardrobe because inside it would have passed on the smell to all Mama's and Papa's clothes. Mama told us jokingly:

"Take your bread upstairs and eat it in front of the wardrobe, close your eyes and you'll think you're eating a herring sandwich" -- which luxury was beyond our means.

Before Christmas the women festooned the ceiling with bunches of mistletoe and Papa had to be quick to escape their, to him, unwelcome kisses. He managed it by carrying a chair in front of him.

"But yer can't refuse to come an' 'ave a drink with us in't pub, Mr. Himmanule."

"O, 'ee don't drink, I bet 'ees never seen t'inside of a pub."

"That's what you think," Papa defended himself. "Every Saturday night my three boys have to come and carry me home from the pub on a stretcher -- dead drunk."

A respectful silence greeted this piece of information.

"Eee, get away with yer -- 'ee's pullin' our leg, pubs are shut on Saturday night, they're an' all."

The manager chided Papa for his over-literary English:

"You talk like Shakespeare, Mr. Emanuel, but Shakespeare's been dead for many a good year."

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Towards the end of January was Jacob's thirteenth birthday when he would be Bar-Mitzvah. From that day on he would be accountable for his own actions and also count as a man in the ten-man quorum in synagogue worship and the three-man quorum for Grace After Meals. He had learnt to read the chapters from the Book of Exodus and from the Prophet Ezekiel that were due to be read in synagogue on his Bar-Mitzvah Sabbath from the unvowelled, handwritten parchment scroll used in synagogue Bible readings. With Papa's help

he had prepared a brief homiletical exposition which he was to deliver at the reception at home that was to follow the synagogue service. Mama was saving as much sugar and fat from our rations as she could spare for the cakes, biscuits and other goodies she was planning to prepare for the occasion. And then I went and spoilt Jacob's Bar-Mitzvah just as I spoilt Gitta's chance of winning a scholarship to Broughton High.

There had been many crystal clear days and nights during the winter of 1940/41 which the German air force utilized for heavy raids on Britain. I suppose we ought to have slept in an air-raid shelter, but we had none. There wasn't one at work either. One morning we saw a German bomber sky-write a huge M, just to inform us, lest we entertained any illusions, that our efforts at camouflage were quite ineffective, that they had come over in order to bomb us right here in Manchester. It got so fierce that Hannah told us to leave the work-benches and that we'd all go to the nearest public shelter. We raced round the corner and sat in comparative safety for an hour or so until the All-Clear sounded. The shelter had been crowded with women and children from the slum area around us. In spite of the bitter winter weather many of the tiny girls crawled on the concrete floor on their bare bottoms. There were a lot of itchy heads and unwiped noses. A few weeks later one of the Manchester newspapers reported that an outbreak of scarlet fever had been traced to this particular air-raid shelter. I was one of the victims.

For a number of days we had worked with hot water bottles perched on our laps because the factory heating was out of order. Hannah claimed that it was due to the bombing. The area had been badly blitzed, the near-by Assizes had sustained a direct hit, though the adjacent Strangeway Prison had been spared. On the third morning without heating my fingers grew more and more numb and my head so heavy that I held it up with difficulty. By midmorning I realized that it wasn't just the cold, but that I was ill. However, I wasn't going



to permit myself the luxury of being ill. I couldn't afford to stay away from work, we needed my wages. A little later my friend of "Land of Hope and Glory" remonstrated with me:

"You look proper poorly, bed's the place for you, love, I'll go and tell Hannah that you are ill."

I did not argue. I knew she was right.

"Hannah says you'd be best off home if you can't pull your weight here."

For all practical purposes, Hannah and Ray ran their father's factory.

Dr. Wislicki came straight from his afternoon surgery. After a thorough examination he said:

"I'm not a hundred percent sure, but I suspect scarlet fever. I'll call in again early tomorrow morning, by then I should know definitely. Meanwhile don't let the other children come near her."

The following day he was sure of his diagnosis:

"She ought to be sent to an isolation hospital," my heart sank. "But the Manchester one's been bombed and the remaining one is a long way out; I don't know how you'd get kosher food to her there. Maybe, she could remain at home?" My spirits soared. "But it won't be easy for you, Mrs. Emanuel. Betty has to be kept scrupulously isolated and also all the things she uses. I suggest you keep a bowl with a lysol solution outside her door and wash your hands in it every time you've been with her; also hang a sheet outside her door, and, Oh, you'd best also sleep with her. Do you think you can cope with all that?"

"Of course. Anyway, there's no choice. How long will she have to stay in bed?"

"Five weeks. Then the Sanitation Department will take her bedding away to be fumigated and burn any books she has handled."

The first few days I felt too rotten to care what went on around me. Soon gifts began to arrive from friends: A tin of peaches to tempt my lost appetite. Actually, I was pleased to lose some weight. Now that I had the leisure to look at myself, I noticed that my hips were much fatter than my upper arms and ought to have a few inches sliced off them. Still, the tinned peaches were a real treat. I also received a large puzzle and ten books. Among them Adrian Bell's "Pip" and James Hilton's "Good-Bye Mr. Chips," both very readable. But John Habberton's "Helen's Babies" was a bit too childish for me, besides, the language seemed artificial; surely, children neither talked nor behaved as described in the book even when it was first written. It was a great pity that all the books and the puzzle would be burnt once I was well again.

Papa came to visit me in the evenings; he did not sit down, but stood in front of the fireplace warming his backside and trying to think of something to say. One evening he made some rare personal remarks.

"You consider yourself cleverer than you really are, but you don't utilize the talents you do possess." He did not explain what he meant. Was I presumptuous then in thinking and hoping that my factory work was only temporary and that once the war ended I would be able to go back to school -- high-school, of course -- and maybe still train to become a gym teacher?

"You aren't steady enough," he continued. "You are like a butterfly." Was he referring to my having left the Victoria Clothing Company after just a few months? And did he think I was wasting my time at Grecian Street School where I attended a gym class once a week after work? Sitting still all day long on my stool in front of the electric sewing machine, I felt badly in need of exercise. There was not much apparatus in the school gymnasium, but it was better than nothing and did me the world of good. I was thrilled that Papa had troubled to

think about me even if the result was not exactly flattering, but then, our parents did not believe in praising us.

Papa went to Davidson and Diamond to collect the wages due to me. They paid me till ten forty-five on Wednesday -- to the minute when I had left work, not a penny more, and they hadn't even asked how I was. It made my blood boil and I decided there and then that I would not return to work for them. Finding myself a new job would present no problem as I was an experienced machinist by now -- worse luck.

The children were not allowed to go to school during the three-week incubation period for scarlet fever. Obviously, none of their friends were allowed to come to our house and they were not welcome at the home of anyone else, except that of our doctor's elderly parents who invited them to a splendid tea, there was buttered toast with jam, cake and biscuits.

On the Sabbath morning of Jacob's Bar-Mitzva, when the rest of the family went to synagogue, so that I would not feel too miserable, Gitta stayed behind with me. After Jacob had read his portions, Mama returned and sent Gitta to the reception at the synagogue. Several lady congregants had baked cakes and biscuits with the provisions Mama had saved up. Food prepared in our "contaminated" home was apparently considered dangerous. Thus, there was no reception at home and no one came to congratulate Jacob and his parents. Jacob had acquitted himself well, Mama told me, his reading from the Pentateuch and Prophets had been both faultless and beautiful.

Our strained financial circumstances, shared by more or less all our immediate circle, hardly permitted buying even moderately priced presents. In addition to a Tallit -- a prayer shawl -- and phylacteries, for which Mama and I sewed velvet bags, Jacob received a number of books and a navy-blue suit which boasted his first pair of long trousers. A week or two earlier, an acquaintance of ours, a British Jew -- and not a refugee like us -- who dealt in



men's suitings arrived at our house, holding aloft a brown paper wrapped parcel. "A present, a present!" he called out happily. And a wonderful present it was: a suit length for Jacob's Bar-Mitzvah suit.

At Beni's Bar-Mitzvah still in Hamburg, apart from a home reception after the synagogue service, Mama, Oma and Fanny had prepared a festive supper for close family and friends. It had to be milky, of course, as no kosher meat was available in Nazi Germany. There were speeches, as well as a play written by Papa and performed by us children, without Beni, naturally, since it was to be a surprise for him. Papa introduced a serious note into his address, in keeping with the times. It was 1936, three years since Hitler's election as Reichskanzler, Germany's Chancellor. "Where shall we be for Jacob's Bar-Mitzvah?", he wondered. Beni had received lots of lovely presents, a black leather suitcase, several wallets, fountain pens, stacks of books, even a bicycle. I hoped with all my heart that a comparison with Beni's Bar-Mitzvah would not make Jacob too unhappy. And I felt awful at being a contributory factor to his somewhat miserable Bar-Mitzvah, but he never once held it against me.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not long after the quarantine period had ended and the children were back at school, Gitta's class sat for the scholarship examination; passing it qualified a pupil for a free grammar school place. In due course the results were announced. Gitta had failed. How was it possible? Mama went to St. John's School, just up the road, to find out. The headmaster shrugged his shoulders:

"She didn't stand a chance."

"But she is among the best pupils in her class."

"So she is, no one denies it."

"Then why did she fail the scholarship examination?"

"Why? Because she didn't sit for the Intelligence Test which was held when Gitta did not come to school as her older sister had scarlet fever."

\* \* \* \* \*

I was dreadfully bored in bed. No one was allowed to visit me, and I knew my books almost by heart. There was no money to buy new ones, especially since they would have to be burnt, and I could obviously not borrow books from the public library. Papa suggested that I learn a list of blessings by heart. The more common ones for the different kinds of food I already knew. For fruit which grows on trees it is: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who createst the fruit of the trees." And for potatoes, carrots and other root vegetables it's the same formula except that the word "earth" is substituted for trees. For many types of food, such as chocolate, for example, the blessing is: "Blessed art Thou . . . by whose word all things exist." All these blessings are recited in Hebrew. A byproduct of these blessings is the fact that we never pop anything into our mouth automatically, since there is always an appropriate blessing to be recited first. Now I set about learning the more rarely recited blessings such as "On seeing trees blooming the first time in the year; On seeing a Sage distinguished for his knowledge of the Law; On seeing Wise Men distinguished for other than sacred knowledge; On seeing a King and his Court" -- I had never yet had an opportunity to recite that one. The list of blessings goes on and on -- I learnt the lot. Out of sheer boredom I also learnt by heart the Minor Prophets in chronological order: Hosea, Joel,

Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi -  
- all 12 of them.

My skin had come off in strips, as our doctor said it would -- occasionally with some help from me. The new skin had a rosy, translucent look. I particularly admired the appearance of my hands, they were slim and dainty in shape, but now they looked positively lady-like as a result of five weeks with no washing-up, peeling potatoes, no cleaning and no dusting. Poor Mama's hands, in contrast, were red and raw from being washed in the lysol solution. Mama looked at people's hands and fingers as a clue to their character. She herself had beautifully shaped hands, slightly larger than mine, though she was shorter than I by two and a half inches. When our doctor pronounced me healthy, the fumigation people were ordered. We telephoned the Health Department several times, but they didn't and didn't come so that I was forced to spend an extra, sixth week, in bed. At last the great day dawned, a large van stopped in front of our house. The men took away my bedding, books and puzzle.

"I'm sorry to see these good companions of mine go," I confessed to the men.

"But you'll have them all back next week along with your bedding."

"Then you don't burn the books?"

"Of course not!"

Since I was firmly resolved not to return to Davidson and Diamond, I found myself a new job before I went to collect my health insurance and unemployment cards. Ray and Hannah were aghast when I asked for my cards. Not a word about my long absence. Not a question about my illness.

"So you want more money," Hannah hissed, and after some hesitation: "O, all right, we'll give you an extra half a crown, not that you deserve it."

"You don't understand: I-am-not-coming-back-to-work-for-you."



They realized I meant it. Hannah's bulging, pale-blue fish eyes nearly popped out of their sockets.

"How dare you give us notice, you ungrateful wretch. We'll never ever employ another refugee -- not even if he comes crawling on his bended knees."

Her poisonous outburst only strengthened my resolve and I replied with all the cold dignity I was able to muster, for I was boiling with rage:

"If any refugee comes begging you for work just send him to me, job's aren't hard to come by these days as you know perfectly well."

After all, that was why Hannah had offered me a pay rise although I had not asked for one.

"Give her her cards, Ray, and let her go."

I went, but not before I had said goodbye to my fellow machinists.

\* \* \* \* \*

H. Marks Ltd., my new place of work, was a large, modern, purpose-built factory in Waterloo Road. It manufactured waterproof and gaberdine raincoats as well as army uniforms. I was started on stitching pocket linings, dozens and dozens of them every day. We were on time work and not on piece work and I missed the challenge of being able to increase the money I would take home in my weekly pay packet by my own effort. Even though I did not work with the rubber solution used on the waterproofs, the smell clung to all my belongings. Once back home, I had to change my clothes, and if I had not finished my sandwiches at work they had to be thrown out because their rubber taste made them inedible; oddly enough, inside the factory I hardly noticed this horrid taste and smell.

Financially I had hardly improved myself, I now earned £2.0.0. a week. However, the factory was well and efficiently run, without meanness and without cheating the workers. I sat at a bench with other girls of my own age except for one refined, middle-aged woman, a Jewish refugee from Vienna. The foreman was a youngish, pleasant Jew whose lame leg kept him out of the army. Every month or two a trolley loaded with sweets and chocolates made the rounds of the work benches, from which we were permitted to buy up to a fixed amount -- this was not counted into our normal monthly chocolate ration. Another bonus was the possibility to go to Papa's near-by pickle and herring place when our lunch breaks coincided.

One lunch-time at my factory the talk turned to the clothes ration. Unlike the rest of the workers, it was not clothing coupons I was short of, but money on which to spend them. I happened to mention that I possessed a piece of woollen material which would make me a much needed jacket, except that I did not know how to cut it out. One of the cutters asked me to bring it along, offering to cut it out for me. The following day I gave him the piece of cloth. Nothing happened for a number of weeks, I did not like to remind the cutter, an elderly Jew. When I had more or less resigned myself to the loss of the material, he handed me a finished jacket. For many years I treasured it, not only because it was the only jacket I had, even more I loved it for the altruistic kindness that had gone into its making.

\* \* \* \* \*

My occasional shared dinner breaks with Papa came to a sudden end. He had been appointed as supervisor of the Manchester Kashrut Authority for the Passover season. In addition to his other duties he was now also responsible that the products be kosher, that is,

ritually pure. The workers ate their sandwiches at the tables where they worked. This was a dangerous practice before the festival of Passover when even one bread crumb in a product makes it unfit to be eaten on Passover. Mr. Gross, the owner, considered Papa's request that the sandwiches be eaten away from the jars and bottles exaggerated and only grudgingly gave in. Since this was one of the few concerns to produce pickled herrings and cucumbers, to bottle oil and vinegar kosher for Passover, there was tremendous demand for its products. When he asked Papa to give him the labels with the kashrut stamp so that the work of affixing them to the jars would not be interrupted during Papa's brief lunch-break, Papa refused to hand them over. Mr. Gross was furious:

"Do you suspect me of wanting to put treifes -- non-kosher ingredients -- into the jars? I'm every bit as religious as you."

"Of course I don't suspect you, but since I am the kashrut supervisor I'm not authorised to hand over the labels to anyone, not even to you."

"Is that so? Very well then, either you give me the labels or we dispense with your service."

Papa went home and made an appointment with the rabbi who had appointed him.

"You acted correctly, Mr. Emanuel, and according to the letter of the law."

"In that case, since the firm's products are under your supervision, would you please explain this to Mr. Gross."

The rabbi wrung his hands, obviously ill at ease.

"I'm afraid it's not as simple as all that. The man means well, he is deeply hurt by your lack of confidence in him. Moreover, he is very generous and contributes to numerous charities. We should not offend such a man."



Papa forbore to mention that the man's "generosity" had not prevented him from keeping Papa's health insurance sick-pay and making him sign that he had received it when, as a result of a badly infected finger that needed lancing in hospital, he was unable to come to work for a few days. It had been a work accident, caused by a rusty nail in one of the wooden crates.

"Do I understand you correctly then that you want me to hand over the kashrut labels to Mr. Gross so that he can affix them in my absence?"

"That is his condition for your return, isn't it?"

"But that makes a mockery of my position as kashrut supervisor," and with a deep sigh, "in that case I can no longer be responsible for the kashrut." Papa opened his attaché case and gave the labels to the rabbi.

"I'm truly sorry, Mr. Emanuel, but I am sure that you understand my position."

Not one of us did. We were furious with the rabbi for being such a weakling. And here was Papa, out of work just before Passover with all its extra expenses.

\* \* \* \* \*

I had been working at H. Marks Ltd. since the spring of 1941. When I applied for the job I had made it a condition to be permitted to leave early enough on Fridays so as to get home before the start of the Sabbath. According to the Jewish calendar the day ends at sunset, as we read in the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth . . . And there was evening and there was morning, one day." Throughout the spring and summer I had been able to work a full Friday since it got dark very late -- not far off midnight, in fact -- because one hour of summer time all year round and then a second hour during the summer,

were introduced to save on electricity consumption. Now it was autumn and grew dark well before 6 o'clock, the time work stopped. When I asked the manager to leave early on Friday afternoon he did not remember my having made this a condition when I was taken on.

"Sorry, but you'll have to stay till six like everyone else, we can't make exceptions."

"But I can't possibly desecrate the Sabbath; you can deduct the time from my wages."

"Out of the question. If you leave one minute before six, you need not trouble to come back on Monday morning."

Of course, I went home early, but with a heavy heart. The following day Bill, the retired policeman who worked alongside me, brought me my week's wages, the pay packets being given out shortly before work stopped. And what was even better, he delivered a message from the manager that I was to come in on Monday as usual. After the Sabbath had ended I opened my wage packet, nothing had been deducted for the time I had not been at work. On Monday the manager asked me if I was willing to come in for the whole of Sunday morning in which case I could leave early on Friday afternoon. It was odd to find myself in the silent, almost deserted factory with just a handful of workers. No machines were switched on. My work consisted of checking finished garments. After a couple of weeks the Sunday work ceased, it was probably not worth while to open up the factory for so few workers.

I had been working at Marks for fifteen months without having received a pay rise. The reason given: young people like myself were classed as "learners," to be trained as expert machinists who expected to make a life-long profession of this type of work. But that was not my idea. I was a machinist for just as long as the war lasted, after that I would return to school -- I never did. Meanwhile, my only aim was to take home as large a pay packet as possible to help out with the family budget. With some regrets, for I had not been actively unhappy at Marks, in June 1942 I handed in my notice.

On February 28, 1941, my sixteenth birthday, I became an Enemy Alien. I had to register at the Salford City Police which issued me with a booklet, price one shilling.

No. 796756

Aliens Order, 1920

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CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION

The certificate contained 24 pages for Endorsements And Remarks. It took ~~twelve~~ years for the final entry on page 12:

Registered as a Citizen of the U.K. and Colonies under Section  
6 (2) of the British Nationality Act, 1948 (See Home Office  
letter No. R. 1016 dated 24/3/53).

City Police Station

26 Feb 1953

OXFORD

The inside cover and page 1 contained personal details and a passport photo.

Page 2: Leave to land granted at SOTON on 21-4-39 on condition that the holder does not remain in the United Kingdom longer than 12 MONTHS, and does not enter any employment, paid or unpaid, while in the United Kingdom.



The second entry on this same page: Permission granted for employment as Machinist with Nathanson and Pearl. 1/3 Mount Pleasant, Manchester, ref. Ministry of Labour Letter dated 4/11/1940.

Britain being at war, the unemployment problem had disappeared, and foreigners were permitted to enter the workforce where British workers were in short supply.

Like my elders, I too now had to be home by 10.30 p.m. I was no longer allowed to ride a bicycle, to possess a camera and to travel further than five miles from home without prior police permission.

Page 3: Permission granted for employment as machinist with H Marks Ltd Waterloo Rd. Cheetham Manchester 8 subject to review as necessary

Lnt Sargent

3.4.41

Ministry of Labour and National Service, Employment Exchange,  
Trafford Rd., Salford 5, Lancs.

The first entry on page 4 was a boost to my morale:

The holder of this certificate is to remain exempted until further order from internment and from the special restrictions applicable to Enemy Aliens.

..... Chairman

Regional Advisory Committee, No. 10.

Date .....

City of Manchester Police

27 June 1941

Aliens' Registration Office

Chapter 12

My new work place was with Messrs. S. Baker in Bradford Road, Ancoats. This was a depressing slum district consisting of endless grey streets lined with small, mean, terraced houses that fronted straight on to the street. Many of them had no bath and only an outdoor toilet. There were little, dingy, fly-blown corner shops and tall, black, forbidding looking factories. A canal ran along the side of my factory, though "ran" is not the right word, its stagnant black water set up a grey swirling mist in winter, hardly visible through the filthy factory windows. In summer the canal stank abominably of rotten eggs and decaying fish, though I can't imagine how a fish could have survived for a single day in that polluted brew.

My new bosses were four Baker brothers. The one who interviewed me appeared puzzled, maybe because I neither looked nor sounded like a local Ancoats factory girls. I wore no make-up and no headscarf, nor did I talk broad Lancashire. He warned me that his factory being under army contract, I would not be able to leave of my own free will since I was over sixteen years of age. I would earn three pounds a week. I started my new job on June 19th 1942; little did I dream that I would remain there for three long years.

The factory was a black three-storey building. On my floor we machined, of all things, little girls' hats and bonnets. That wasn't my idea of war-work, and I was happy when we changed over to sewing RAF great-coats. I was the only Jewish machinist on my work bench. My friend Edith, the eldest of the family with four daughters from Frankfurt, worked on the floor above mine. We spent our dinner hour together. There was a work's canteen which supplied cooked lunches, but Edith and I could not make use of it since the meals were, obviously, not kosher. We took sandwiches from home. My parents believed that fresh bread was unhealthy, also it cut up more quickly than a loaf which was a few days old. My



sandwiches were usually spread with margarine and jam or home-made cream cheese. We did buy a cup of tea with which to wash down our sandwiches, but it was black tea as we were not allowed to drink milk not watched during the milking lest it come from some animal other than a cow, which was ritually forbidden. Observant Jews missed out on a great deal of the foods available to the general public, such as meals at restaurants, canteens and school meals which constituted an addition to peoples' rations. Moreover, we were unable to utilize our rations fully since we could not eat the tinned meat nor the yellow cheese because it was said to contain rennet, a curdling agent from the stomach of cows. We did get extra cooking fat in place of bacon.

My foreman, Mr. Bee, was a middle-aged Jew married to a non-Jewish woman. His private life was no concern of mine; however, the presence of a religious Jewess gave the poor man a guilty conscience. He tried hard to convince me that back in the "old country" - - in his case, somewhere in Poland -- it may have been all right to observe all those old-fashioned, bothersome laws like not working on the Sabbath or eating only kosher food; they were irrelevant, if not reactionary, in an enlightened country such as Britain. I knew that in eastern Europe Jews had for the most part lived in a closed society where the observance of Jewish religious law was a way of life, taken for granted. Since the end of the nineteenth century, as a result of increasing anti-Jewish manifestations in Poland and Russia, many of the more enterprising young people had left those countries to make a new life for themselves in western Europe, Britain, America, South Africa, Canada, Australia, the Argentine and Palestine. Away from the watchful eyes of parents and far from their familiar environment, it was all too easy to drop the now irksome religious observances which seemed out of place in the modern western world. Yet, a nagging feeling of guilt tended to surface when semi-assimilated Jews met with strictly observant, yet clearly modern and westernized co-

religionists. Perhaps this is the reason why it was easier for German Jews like ourselves not to succumb to the temptation, indeed not to be easily tempted to denigrate our religion and our way of life to the status of a useless fossil. Ours was a successful fusion of ancient tradition and modern European culture.

Mr. Bee made what he thought sarcastic, but which were really rather pathetic jokes at my refusal to enjoy a nourishing, hot meal in the work's canteen. He became quite indignant when he found out that I had neither eaten nor drunk on the fast-day which commemorates the breaching of Jerusalem's city wall by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century B.C.E.

"You are cheating your employers," Mr. Bee lectured me, "in fact, you're hampering the war effort." And that was when we were sewing little girls' bonnets. "You can't possibly do an honest day's work on an empty stomach. As I've told you before, these outmoded customs don't apply to this time and age."

The three weeks following this fast day are a period of mourning when no weddings take place, one must not attend theatre or cinema performances, nor listen to music. They culminate in the Ninth of Av, the national day of mourning for the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in the year 586 B.C.E., and of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. Along with the destruction of the Temples, we mourn the resultant end of Israel's independence, and the expulsion of the Jewish inhabitants from their land by the victorious invaders, the outcome of which was the two-thousand-year-long exile which was affecting each one of us personally to this very day. The outbreak of World War I as well as many other calamities had occurred on the Ninth of Av. I was careful to conceal from Mr. Bee that I was not eating and drinking. At six o'clock when the machines were switched off and it was time to go home, I asked him:

"Mr. Bee, did you happen to notice that I worked less well today than on other days?"

"No. Why d'you ask?"

"Because today being the Ninth of Av, I fasted."

Mr. Bee had no answer, he just shook his head sadly, his protruding lower lip trembling slightly.

A hum of conversation usually accompanied the whirring of the electric sewing machines as we stitched children's hats or parts of RAF coats. The work was repetitive and monotonous, leaving our minds idle. At eleven o'clock on most mornings several of the Baker brothers made the rounds of the different departments, noses held up snootily, they looked straight in front of them, not acknowledging their employees by so much as a nod. As soon as they approached a deathly silence fell upon our workbench, heads were obsequiously bent over sewing machines until the "bosses" were safely out of sight, when backs straightened up and the companionable chatter started up again. I had made it a habit to sit bolt upright and look fixedly at the "bosses" as they made their round of inspection. My fellow workers' servile lack of spirit I found positively nauseating. My arrogant conduct did not pass unnoticed. The youngest Baker brother, a young man in his early twenties, beautifully turned out and barbered, was delegated to deal with me. A thoughtful, lofty expression on his face, he looked me up and down, lingering for a while on my cotton apron, the badge of the machinist.

"We would thank you not to incite our workers to socialism -- I promise you a soap box for use in Hyde Park after the war."

I never did claim that soap box. Close to forty years later, on a pilgrimage to Ancoats, I was unable to find the factory. I asked a local, middle-aged woman:

"Do you remember a clothing factory around here called S. Baker?"



Her eyes lit up with a toothless smile as she explained:

"It's coom down, loove."

However, back in the 'forties it was still very much in evidence.

I was to have another brush with authority. Our bench was put on piece-work. We were to be paid a fixed rate for every dozen hats, sleeves, collars and so on, so that the more we produced, the fatter our wage packet would be on Fridays. Mrs. Buckley, one of the older machinists, warned us:

"Don't you go and work yer fingers to the bone right away, for if them bosses see that we do too well, they'll cut the rate."

We all followed her advice although we were itching to go all out. I was bored to tears all day long and the incentive to take home a bit extra, to imagine my parents' pleased faces as I handed over my pay-packet, the occasional treat I would permit myself, such as my own copy of the Readers' Digest, a bottle of Tizer, a red, fizzy drink, to be bought on the rare hot Sunday morning at the corner grocery and surreptitiously smuggled into the house, to be shared by Gitta and me in the privacy of our bedroom, and on a fine Sunday afternoon to take out a rowing boat on Heaton Park or Boggart Hole Clough Lake, and best of all to buy a ticket for a Hallé Concert -- my thoughts kept pace with my flying fingers as I steered the cloth at top speed under the sewing needle. This happy state of affairs lasted less than six weeks. We were put back on time-work, no reason given. My fellow machinists grumbled for a day or two, boasting: "Between you an' I, 'app'n I catch one of 'em bloody Bakers, I'll tell 'em what Ah thinks." But they had no gumption. My own outlet for my anger, like my colleagues' grumbling, did nothing to alter the situation, but it gave me a great deal of satisfaction. Now that I knew the rate of pay, I tried to see to it that my bosses would not make an extra shilling on me beyond the fixed weekly wage that I was paid. After two weeks

Mr. Bee, wringing his hands with embarrassment and a look of 'how could you have done that to me,' whispered that Mr. Baker wanted to talk to me. Once again the youngest Mr. Baker was sent to put me in my place. The supercilious look of our first encounter had given way to one of vexed admiration.

"Miss Emanuel, you don't deny, do you, that your output is lower than it used to be."

"Really?"

"We've got wise to your little game."

For an answer I looked at him with wide-eyed innocence -- at least that's the effect I was trying to achieve.

"Don't stand there pretending you don't know what I'm talking about. You are too clever by half."

I smiled inwardly.

"You aren't doing a stitch more than you get paid for, in fact, you've got it down to a fine art -- to the last halfpenny."

I almost broke into a jig. I hadn't realized quite how successful I had been.

"Why don't you cooperate with us?"

"Would you in my place?"

Young Mr. Baker turned on his heels, at a loss for an answer, and I returned to my sewing machine. My work mates were all agog to know why I had been called away from the work bench.

"An' right you was," was the unanimous verdict, "a mean trick an' all to put us back on time," but not one of them followed my example.

They were a pleasant, good-natured bunch of women and girls, but foul-mouthed and dirty minded. The older, married ones seemed determined to corrupt what innocence and

purity were left in the minds of the young girls. Apart from illnesses and operations, love was their main subject of conversation. It was mainly devoted to the Hollywood versions of that theme, the sadder the better: "I had a lovely cry at the flicks" was supreme praise. Their reading was confined to the more lurid love stories in the Women's Weeklies. But in spite of this heavy diet of romance, love meant but one thing -- the sex act -- where tender feelings and romantic notions were as out of place as in the stinking canal outside our factory. I myself had no patience for romantic bosh, but to my mind, sex without love was a travesty and a tragedy.

It was a week to Christmas 1943. Mrs. Buckley collected money from us all for our after lunch drinks on Christmas eve. During the lunch break on that day, everyone went to the local pub except me; it was probably a mixture of standoffishness, fastidiousness and a feeling of not really belonging that would not permit me to join them. Half an hour later they were back, in the best of spirits. We opened the bottles of apple cider for the purchase of which we had clubbed together. It was sacrilege to drink this pure distillation of the taste of summer from thick tea mugs, but we had no glasses. At half past one, when our lunch hour ended, the electric power was switched on again and we sat down at our machines. Suddenly, Ronnie, the sweet and gentle young girl who worked at the machine opposite mine, burst into tears. The women took no notice.

"What is it, Ronnie?" I asked, quite at a loss to account for her heart-rending sobs.

"I promised my Mum faithfully, I'd have no more than two drinks a' I've had four -- maybe five." The poor girl was unable to focus her eyes in order to thread the needle of her machine. "I'm drunk," she wailed, "what will they say at 'ome?"

"Ouch," cried one of the women, the needle of her machine had stitched into her thumb instead of the cloth. Mr. Bee hurried to her aid, he turned back the wheel, which



released her thumb. A few minutes later the power was switched off and the factory came to a stand-still. We were told to take the afternoon off and go home. This was the established ritual on the eve of every Christmas and New Year. Why couldn't the Bakers give the workers the afternoon off before some hapless, half-tipsy worker had hurt herself? Unlike the rest of us Ronnie was in no hurry to take off her apron and put on her coat and head scarf. She was afraid to go home and face her family in her present state. Ronnie came from a devout Catholic family, she was much much better spoken than the rest of the machinists -- the result of a convent school education. She once told me that her eldest sister, though already in her late twenties, was not married and was not likely to marry because she had an illegitimate child, to which Joan, a blousy, straw-blond and stupid seventeen-year-old had retorted:

"So what? I'm trying to get me boy friend ter make me pregnant so 'e'll 'ave ter marry me in spite of 'is bloody parents 'oo don't think I'm good enough for their precious son." Fortunately, the boy friend had too much sense or they were simply lucky.

Christmas and Boxing Day I utilized for copying out out the translation I had made of a German children's book, a charming story of a foundling puppy. I sent it off to Macmillan. In due course it arrived back with a printed slip, thanking me for submitting the manuscript, but that unfortunately it was not suitable. Hopefully, I sent it on its way once more, this time to Chatto and Windus. It returned like a homing pigeon with a rejection slip. The process of translating had given me much pleasure and satisfaction. Many years later, in a rare fit of tidying up, I came across the manuscript and was aghast how I could have had the nerve to offer such a rotten translation to reputable firms of publishers, except that at the time I had not realized just how poor it really was.

A few months after that Christmas of 1943 I had an accident at work. When the bell rang signalling the end of the lunch break I hurried back to my workbench carrying my tea cup, and tripped up on a floor cloth that lay in my path. As I picked up myself and the pieces of broken china, I felt blood streaming down my face. I had fallen on the broken cup and cut my upper lip. I was despatched to Ancoats Hospital in the Bakers' posh car. In the Emergency Ward I was told that the gash would have to be stitched. My mouth was numb so that the actual stitching did not hurt, but it nauseated me to see the needle go into my flesh -- by dint of squinting downwards -- and a long thread come out and being pulled taut. After a few knots were tied, the thread was cut and most of my mouth covered with a bandage, held in place with a plaster. When I turned round I saw Edith standing behind me; she had been sent after me for moral support and to accompany me home in the Bakers' chauffeur driven car.

At home Mama bundled me into bed and telephoned our doctor. There was really nothing he could do; however he caused me agony by telling jokes that made me laugh -- that pulled at the wound. When the children returned from school, Jacob and Gitta stuck their heads into the room, took one look at me and withdrew. Not so Raphael. He marched in and demanded to know: "Was it a good cup you broke?" I shook my head, and out he marched, clearly relieved at my reply. Years later he told me that it had been a good cup after all, one of three remaining from a set from our paternal grandparents' home. My few days of unexpected holiday from work were quite spoilt by my fear of what I should look like for the rest of my life. I was no great beauty at the best of times, but with a stitched upper lip I would be hideously ugly. Back at Ancoats Hospital, a young doctor removed the plaster and snipped the three stitches.

"Hm," he commented, "we made a good job of that, like to see?"

Before I could say "no," he had whipped out a mirror and held it up to my face. My feeling of relief was immense. There was an angry red line at the right hand corner of my mouth; otherwise I looked quite unchanged. I beamed at him. He smiled back: "In another year or so the scar will hardly show and you'll be as pretty as ever!" Pure music in my ears.

My next pay-packet made me livid: the days of my absence from work had been deducted from my wages. The Bakers had been so kind and put their car and driver at my disposal, how could they be so mean now? I asked to see one of them.

"We are perfectly within our rights to deduct the days you stayed home from your wages, you shouldn't have run with a cup in your hand."

"And were you within your rights to have a crumpled-up floorcloth lying in the middle of the floor?"

The missing wages were made up in the following week's pay-packet.

This accident had been the only noteworthy event to break the monotony of life in many a month. One day was like another, utterly predictable and dull and unpleasant.

Work was one long bore. Silently I sang all the Hebrew songs I knew. I tried to remember as many European capitals as I could. Edith felt as I did. We therefore decided to teach ourselves shorthand during our dinner breaks. We each splurged two shillings and nine pence on a Pitman's Shorthand Manual. It was fun to learn something -- anything. However, I never reached the stage where shorthand was quicker than longhand. But I was keen to make use of my newly acquired skill. Mama had asked me to copy a cake recipe from the Jewish Chronicle, the widely read weekly -- especially the Hatch, Match, and Despatch announcements. We could not afford to subscribe to the paper so I biked to the house of the Wislickis, our doctor and his doctor wife, who had become our personal friends, to copy the recipe. They lived on the boundary of Salford and Manchester, in fact half their house was



in one city and half in the other. Alas, when it came to transcribing the recipe into longhand, I was unable to make out the amount of sugar required, so I had to swallow my pride, ride back and have another look at the paper.

Yes, I rode a bicycle. Its use was strictly limited, but very occasionally I broke the law. My Aliens' Registration Certificate contained a new entry which read: "Aliens' (Movement Restriction) Order 1940. The holder of this certificate is hereby authorised to have in her possession or under her control the following prohibited article(s): ONE BICYCLE. For use in travelling to and from place of employment and Evening Classes ONLY. Alien Registration, Salford City Police, 5 July 1943."

I had merely asked for permission to cycle to my physical training class, but the police officer, on his own initiative, had generously added permission to ride to work. However, I made no use of this, for I was afraid to cycle right through the centre of town in the black-out. Instead I took two buses to work, one from Great Clowes Street, round the corner from our house, all the way to the Salford Bus Station. From there I walked as far as Stevenson Square where I got a trolley bus to Ancoats. If the weather was pleasant and we felt sufficiently energetic, Edith and I half walked, half jogged from Ancoats to the Salford Bus Station. There were never enough buses during the rush hour when we travelled home, so that we generally had half an hour's wait in the bus queue. When there were empty seats I tried to get the one next to the door as the bulb above it gave me just enough light to read my library book or the Readers' Digest for the purchase of which Edith and I clubbed together. It involved making a detour to London Road -- now called Piccadilly -- Railway Station, whose newspaper kiosk was the only place we knew of that stocked the Digest. The articles covered a wide range of subjects and reassured us that a world existed beyond our narrow, stultifying factory work, our shoe-string existence and war-torn Europe.

It was always good to get home at night where it was warm -- at least in the kitchen -- where there was a hot tasty meal, a pleasant atmosphere, and I could sit undisturbed and read till bedtime once I had washed the dishes or ironed the family wash. But one day was just like the next, nothing good or exciting ever happened to me nor was likely to happen. Life was grey, monotonous and depressing. My favourite weekday was Wednesday, one p.m. to be precise, for by then half the working week was past. Here I was at eighteen, still stuck inside this factory. It was too late for me to return to school even if the war finished tomorrow, which it wouldn't. Would I have to spend the rest of my youth in this treadmill of an existence? What would become of me? NOTHING.

Thank God there was more cheerful news from the battle fronts. Germany was suffering her first serious defeats at Stalingrad and El-Alamein. Our spirits lifted. So the many years of preparation for war had only given the Germans a head start, now the Allies were catching up and even getting the better of her -- but at a frightfully heavy cost in human lives, destruction and suffering. There was also good news for us personally. It arrived in the shape of a letter with a Swedish stamp, addressed in Fanny's handwriting. Someone must have taken the letter from German occupied Denmark and posted it in neutral Sweden -- thank God that Fanny was still alive. Father examined the envelope from all sides. "Open it," we implored. He slit the envelope with his dagger-shaped letter opener and pulled out a thick wad of closely written sheets of airmail paper. As he read his eyes lit up, and indeed the letter read like an exciting adventure story and fairy-tale rolled into one -- moreover, it was true.

Towards the end of September several German officials had secretly informed Danish Social Democrat leaders of the impending round-up of the Jewish population. They, in turn, had passed the warning on to the heads of the Jewish community. Until recently, the Germans had permitted the Danes a certain measure of self-government and on the insistence of the

Danes had grudgingly spared the Danish Jews the fate of the rest of Continental Jewry -- deportation to slave labour and death camps. But of late, the German invaders were showing their true colours also in this country and came down mercilessly on any attempt at Danish resistance, and progressively curtailed the remaining vestiges of Danish self rule. Further attempts by Danish leaders on behalf of the Jewish community were doomed to failure, but even so, they were not going to abandon them without a fight to the terrible fate that had overtaken the Jews of Germany, Austria, Poland, Italy and all the other countries under German domination. The whole country rose to the occasion; from the palace of King Christian X to the home of the simplest fisherman, people tried to warn, to hide and to transport Jews to the coast and from there to neutral and therefore safe Sweden -- right under the noses of the Germans. Some of the fishermen and boat-owners would not even take money for shipping this dangerous human contraband, though a few demanded outrageous sums. All this we only learnt after the war. The following is Fanny's own, personal account of their miraculous escape.

"Three days before Rosh Hashanah -- the Jewish New Year -- David S., a friend of the family, came to warn us of the imminent round-up of all the Jews. David looked anything but a nordic Dane with his black hair and swarthy complexion, but as a member of the civil defence he wore a uniform which he hoped would afford him the necessary protection not to be picked up as a Jew and deported to a concentration camp as he rushed around Copenhagen advising Jews to plan their escape with the help of non-Jewish Danes. David studied veterinary medicine and through his contacts with hospital staff and his former school teachers he helped organize the escape of Denmark's six thousand Jews, the vast majority of whom were saved.



"We locked up our flat and moved upstairs into the attic. For obvious reasons services could not be held at our synagogue, so for the New Year services we re-opened our flat. Stealthily, one by one, the synagogue members made their way to us. The lay cantor took his time over the prayers; he must have known, as we all did, the peril of so many Jews gathered in one place. We could not be certain that no one had been followed by a German or by a Danish Nazi. But there was no hurrying the man. At midday David burst into the flat: 'Are you quite mad? You must all disappear right away to the hiding places that have been found for you.'

"Isi and I were taken in by Ella Nielsen, a retired teacher from David's school. We stayed at her home just outside Copenhagen until we received a message two days later to return to town and go to the nurses' quarters at the hospital, where we spent the night. Copenhagen was under curfew from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. Soon after six the following morning several young Danes turned up: 'We are taking you to a boat anchored opposite Amalienborg Castle. Follow us at a short distance to the tram and get on at the rear, we'll board the front platform and keep watch. If we see something suspicious we'll scratch our necks. Get off at Kongens Nytorv Square from where it's only a ten minutes' walk to the harbour. Always walk twenty metres behind us.'

"Fortunately, the gate into the free harbour opposite Amalienborg was not guarded as we slipped through. We got to a boat that was taking coal to Sweden. The captain asked us for the password and then told us to go below deck and hide among the coal; we were to lift anchor in one, at the most two hours' time. We found some thirty people hiding there already, we were the last to arrive. Time seemed to stand still, occasionally we heard the tramping of heavy boots above our heads. We tried to tell the time on our watches in the almost complete darkness -- three hours, three and a half hours had passed. What had gone

wrong? Had the Germans got wind of our impending escape? I was terrified. Isi stroked my hand and whispered: 'How d'you feel, are you very uncomfortable?' I wanted to reassure him that I hardly felt the coal through the several layers of clothes that I wore. We weren't allowed to take any luggage with us in order not to arouse suspicion so I had put on as many clothes as I possibly could. But I was unable to get a word out, I was literally struck dumb. It was a whole week before I regained my power of speech. After another half an hour we at last felt the longed for movement of the ship's screw. When we had passed through Oresund and had left Danish territorial waters, the hold was opened and we climbed up on deck. We looked at one another and burst out laughing, for we had turned into a collection of chimney sweeps. And you should have seen me, with all those layers of clothes over my outside tummy -- but of course, you can't know, I'm pregnant -- after six years of living comfortably at home, when I longed for a baby, it had to choose this difficult time, but don't worry, I'm doing fine.

"The captain welcomed us on board his ship and invited us to a meal laid for us on a long table on the deck -- unfortunately Isi and I could not partake of it as it wasn't kosher. The captain told us that the long delay had been due to a visit by the German police who demanded to search the boat. He drank with them for three hours until they had forgotten all about the intended search and left the boat in the best of spirits. In the late afternoon we arrived at a small harbour called Limnham south of Malmo where a Swedish nurse met us and took us to a school where we were put up. Next day we two continued to Malmo and looked for work. I was lucky and got a job with an advertising firm, largely on the strength of my experience as a fashion illustrator back in Hamburg. We managed to rent a room with a Swedish family.

"A few days later was the Day of Atonement and I had to ask for the day off. You'll laugh, but something very curious happened in my never very efficient housekeeping. In Denmark food was rationed, but the allowance was liberal compared to this country. The portions I had taken for granted were meant for just one day had to last a week so we had absolutely nothing on which to break the fast at the conclusion of the Day of Atonement. Isi had received permission to travel to Stockholm to see his brother who lived there since before the war. He left that night and even found a seat in the overcrowded train. When the people in his compartment learnt that he had just escaped from Nazi occupied Denmark, they didn't know what to do for him. They offered to share their meagre provisions with him, but even though his stomach was turning over, he had to refuse because the food was obviously not kosher, so then they each offered him a drink from their tiny allowance of strictly rationed brandy -- this was the height of generosity and good will, and it would have been churlish on his part to refuse. As he staggered through his brother's front door, there was a gasp: 'Why man, you are drunk!' But after a bite of something solid in his stomach he was all right. Isi's brother found us a room with a Jewish family and we moved to Stockholm where I found work with the large firm Ervaco and Isi as a representative for a Jewish firm, both of us for very low wages. On our first Sabbath in the synagogue, Isi bensched Gomei (the benediction recited upon recovery from a serious illness or after having escaped from a mortal danger)."

Fanny and Isi called their baby daughter Gitta-Ella -- Gitta after Fanny's late mother and Ella after the courageous old teacher in Copenhagen who had hidden them in her home.





## Chapter 13

"You are only a factory girl," Raphael told me in a fit of temper. That hurt like a punch below the belt. Hadn't I started working in a factory to help Mama, Jacob, Gitta and him when Daddy and Beni were interned and we had precious little to live on? Still, there was no getting around the fact that the others had all improved themselves while I was still stuck inside a factory.

Daddy's dismissal from the pickles' place had been a blessing in disguise. He now worked for a woollen cloth merchant in an office in Portland Street, in the city's business centre. His boss was small, his voice was small and falsetto and the salary he paid Daddy, his only employee, was a microscopic three pounds a week, though we children did not know that then. The only large things about him were his miserliness and his suspicion of all men and of Daddy's business acumen in particular. Daddy felt frustrated when every suggestion of his to improve the business was vetoed out of hand by his small-minded and unimaginative boss. How he would have loved to be an independent businessman once more, but he dare not take that risk so long as he had young children financially dependent on him. Even so, he no longer worked in a smelly factory and had returned to being a white collar worker.

Beni was employed by a firm that made optical lenses. He attended a three-year evening course at the Manchester Technical College, at the end of which he would be a qualified optician, entitled to put the letters FBOA -- Fellow of the British Optical Association -- after his name.

At fourteen, Jacob had won a scholarship to the Salford Technical College, he had come fourth out of a hundred and fifty applicants. Had we misjudged him? He had not seemed to be the intellectual type, his particular gifts appeared to run along more practical

lines. He had, of course, long ago graduated from the experimental stage of pushing in the eyes of our dolls to see how the mechanism worked, he had also grown out of fret-saw work. He was our annual Succah builder. Come the festival of Tabernacles, he built a sturdy booth in our yard from old doors and planks. Our Succah even boasted a window with a glass pane and a roof consisting of two large boards covered with roofing felt that could be lifted up by pulleys when the weather was fine and carefully lowered when it rained. Leafy branches were laid across wooden slats for a ceiling, the inside of the walls were covered with cloth, decorated with suitable pictures, fruit and baubles dangled from the ceiling. Succot must be a lovely festival in Palestine, but in the usually cold and wet German and English autumn we ate our meals huddled in coats, and when there weren't too many of us in the Succah so that there was room for it, our little Valor paraffin stove made it that much more cosy. At the end of the eight-day festival, the Succah was dismantled and the parts stored in our attic. Jacob was the handy member of the family, we appreciated him for never shirking a hard or dirty chore. Like me, he belonged to the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. Beni and Gitta were the brainy ones. We weren't sure about Raphael who was rather lazy at home and at school. All he could get enthusiastic about were books with pictures of buildings, and he played for hours with our large assortment of building bricks.

After two years at the Junior Tech., Jacob graduated to the Senior Technical College. He did very well, particularly in English, and his teacher encouraged him to think of making teaching his profession. Alas, he did not do sufficiently well in some of the technical subjects so that his scholarship was not renewed for a fourth year. Every year Daddy had threatened that if it were not renewed, he would remove Jacob and send him to the Manchester Yeshivah, the Talmudical College, as he was not satisfied with the extent of Jacob's knowledge in Talmud. So that's where he went and to pay for his tuition at the Yeshiva Jacob



taught schoolboys at afternoon Hebrew classes. He was not happy at the Yeshivah, the technical college had been much more to his taste. The most useful and only tangible result of his year at the Yeshivah was a bicycle which he and several fellow students put together on the cheap from individual parts which Jacob had bought.

Thanks to Mama's initiative Gitta had at last overcome her set-back. She had her transferred from St. John's to Grecian Street which later became Broughton Modern School. Gitta was an excellent student, and so, armed with her end-of-term report, Mama went to see the headmistress.

"A very pleasing report. Still, I do not see why you want Gitta to attend a grammar school. The kind of education the children receive at our school fits them very well for their station in life -- after all, it's not as though Gitta will ever want to become a doctor or lawyer."

"Broughton Modern is an excellent school. But as you know, through no fault of her own, Gitta was not given the chance to go to grammar school, and as her report shows, that's where she ought to be."

The headmistress rose as a sign for mother's dismissal. Two years later the headmistress left. Mama made an appointment with her successor. She carefully perused Gitta's latest report.

"Yes, Gitta is indeed an excellent student in all subjects. Even so I do not understand why you want to take her out of our school. She is happy here and well adjusted, and as far as scholastic attainments are concerned, we supply a first rate senior modern education; she's in the A-Stream and even learns French. True, we do not teach Latin and do not prepare our girls for university entrance, but then, she won't want to study, after all."

"Gitta is happy in your school, do not think me ungrateful, please. But we are refugees. We came here penniless, we have no connections and no social contacts which might further our children's future. The only thing which will help them on in life is to acquire as good an education as possible."

The headmistress was silent for a moment. "Yes, I see your point, Mrs. Emanuel. Very well, I'll see what I can do. But please do not be too disappointed if Gitta is not accepted at Broughton High School as it's badly overcrowded."

She reached for the telephone and made an appointment for Mama and Gitta to see the headmistress the following afternoon at two-thirty.

"Don't send Gitta back to school after lunch tomorrow, rather let her rest at home so that she won't have to rush back and forth and arrive tired for her interview at Broughton High School."

Mama followed this kind and sensible advice, but Gitta was too nervous to rest. Carefully dressed in her Sabbath hat, coat and gloves, she set out with an apprehensive Gitta. The school secretary showed them into Dr. Wick's study.

After reading through Gitta's school report, the headmistress looked from Mama to Gitta. "Yes, a girl with such a report belongs here. She must have passed the scholarship examination with flying colours, why didn't she come straight here from St. John's Elementary School?"

Mama explained that because I'd had scarlet fever, Gitta had missed the Intelligence Test. Dr. Wicks was outraged.

"There's nothing easier than to arrange an alternative date -- as the headmaster must surely have known. We are badly overcrowded, but we shall just have to squeeze another chair into the class-room. But before we admit Gitta we must be certain that she is up to our

standard. A grammar school naturally demands more from its girls than a senior modern school; if Gitta is behind the rest of the class, I'm afraid we shan't be able to take her. I suggest we admit her on a trial basis for a week or two." And turning to her secretary: "Please, take Gitta to Miss Firth's class, I believe they have a maths test this afternoon."

"I don't know how to thank you, Dr. Wicks, for giving Gitta this chance, but there's one more thing. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to pay school fees, so I don't know . . ." Dr. Wicks interrupted her.

"Don't worry about that, Mrs. Emanuel. Gitta will be awarded a scholarship -- if she makes the grade."

Gitta passed the maths test. She felt that she wasn't doing too badly in the other subjects either, but her teachers might be of a different opinion. At the end of her first week, she was handed a sealed envelope, addressed to Mrs. R. Emanuel. She turned pale, so that was that. It had only taken them one week to realize that she was not up to the mark. Maybe she'd been presumptuous, but to have to crawl back to Broughton Modern where she would no doubt be made to swallow large chunks of humble-pie -- how was she going to face that? And she had let down Mummy who had tried so hard to give her this chance.

"Don't stand there shaking and quaking," her friend Esther told her off. "How can you tell what's written in the letter by looking at the closed envelope?"

"I just know, that's how."

"Open it, you silly sausage, and stop playing the tragedy queen. I know it's not addressed to you, but your parents aren't ogres, they'll understand."

Of course, they would. Gitta didn't just tear the envelope, but took a pencil from her satchel and neatly slit it open. Both girls stood stock still in the middle of busy Bury New Road. Esther leaned over Gitta's shoulder.



"There, what did I tell you? I knew all along that you'd make it."

Gitta was shaking with relief, then, with a pencil in one hand and the letter in the other, she raced off, round the corner and all the way down Wellington Street. She pressed the bell as though her life depended on it being opened at once. Mother rushed to the door in alarm, was it the police, the fire brigade, had one of us got hurt? Gitta fell through the door.

"Excuse me for opening the letter," she panted, "I just couldn't wait."

"That's all right, of course not." Mama read the fateful letter. "So they are exempting you from Latin because you'll find it hard enough to catch up on some of the other subjects, and you are being awarded a full scholarship, but we'll have to find the money for your uniform." She hugged Gitta. "Wait till Papa hears the good news."

At Broughton Modern the uniform had consisted of a navy gym-slip and a white blouse. As Gitta had no gym-slip she had worn a navy skirt with shoulder straps and a light blue blouse that had come down to her from me. She had not really minded looking different. As a matter of fact, one of her teachers once told a rather untidy girl: "Look at Gitta, she doesn't wear school uniform, but she always looks neat and clean." However, things were different at Broughton High or Bella Vista as the school was generally called after the name of the building in which it was housed. Most of the girls came from comfortable middle-class homes and there was quite a bit of snobbery. Besides, the school insisted on its girls wearing full uniform. By means of scrimping and scraping a navy gym-slip, a navy V-necked pullover, two white cotton blouses and a striped school tie were bought. Her navy beret would have to do in place of the regulation felt hat and the navy gaberdine rain-coat would have to wait a while. The most expensive item on the list was a woollen blazer, but since that was considered something of a luxury she would just have to do without. However, Gitta's heart

hankered after a blazer with the school crest embroidered in gold on the breast pocket. She promised herself that one day she would own a blazer. On several afternoons a week after school and on Sunday mornings she looked after the baby of an acquaintance. Penny by penny and shilling by shilling Gitta saved up her earnings until, after many months, there was enough money for a blazer. And it was worth every penny she felt as she walked rather than sprinted along Bury New Road. For once she had left home in good time and did not have to pray that the policeman on duty at the crossing opposite Vella Vista would hold up the traffic for her to win the race with the second school bell.

She would have liked to wear her blazer throughout the day, but blazers were strictly for out of doors; reluctantly she took it off and hung it on the rail outside her class-room. She stroked the soft, woollen cloth; her blazer stood out in its brand-new splendour from among all the other blazers. When the lunch bell rang she could hardly wait for the class to be dismissed, out she skipped straight to her blazer. There was an empty hook on the rail where her blazer should have been. No, no one had taken her blazer by mistake. A tearful Gitta crept home. She was quite unable to swallow even one mouthful of her lunch. What Mama wouldn't have done to be able to promise her a new blazer. Gitta tried to discover the whereabouts of her blazer, but how could she claim ownership even if she did find another girl wearing it? Any girl mean enough to steal would obviously immediately have cut out the label with Gitta's name. Blazers were not simply bought in a shop, instead a woman who had the agency, came round to the school at regular intervals. On her next visit, the school ordered one blazer -- paid for by the teachers -- for Gitta.

"For goodness sake, stop licking your knuckles," Mama told Raphael one lunch-time.

"But they hurt."

"Come over here and let me have a look."

"What are those red stripes across your hand?"

"That's where the headmaster caned me?"

"Caned you? What for?"

"Because I wouldn't join in the prayers, they're Christian and we mustn't say them."

"What do the other Jewish children do? I'm sure the Koppen children don't say them either."

"Not in their hearts, but they pretend to say them with their lips. I don't think that's right, it's cheating, isn't it, Mummy?"

"Yes, I suppose it is."

Mother made an appointment with the headmaster. After knocking, she entered his study. He was talking to one of his teachers, studiously ignoring her.

"You don't mind if I sit down?"

"What have you come to see me about?"

"Raphael told me that he was caned for not joining in the prayers."

"That's quite correct. I know you are Jews, but our prayers can be said by everyone. The Koppen children are religious Jews just like you and they join in."

Mama did not give the Koppen children away.

"Raphael says his prayers every morning before he leaves for school. He's not trying to be awkward, but . . ." The headmaster impatiently shrugged his shoulders, as far as he was concerned the interview was over.



"We left Germany and became refugees because of religious persecution, we did not expect to have to suffer for our religious beliefs here in England. Good afternoon."

She set about finding another school for Raphael and had him transferred to Broughton Modern School for Boys which was a better school than St. John's and where he was happier.

So here I was, the only member of the family to be stuck in a rut.

\* \* \* \* \*

What filled my life apart from the factory, doing the family ironing and generally helping around the house, the weekly gym lesson, a very occasional visit to a Hallé Orchestra concert, a little knitting and as much reading as time permitted? It did not add up to much even with the Saturday afternoon Agudah girls' group.

The Agudat Yisrael -- Agudah for short -- Movement with branches in many countries, claimed some half a million members. It opposed the political Zionist Movement considering it irreligious, even anti-religious. Besides, the Zionists were presumptuous by taking matters into their own hands instead of waiting for the Messiah to lead the Jewish People from exile back to the Promised Land. However, a Zionist oriented offshoot was founded in 1922 which operates within the framework of the parent association. Several of my cousins from Hamburg live in Palestine on one of its communal agricultural settlements, called a Kibbutz. If I ever get to Palestine, I would like to join them there. The Ezra, of which I had been a member in Hamburg and in Cardiff -- there wasn't one in Manchester -- was the youth movement of this Zionist branch. Several of us refugee girls felt morally obliged to organize activities for the young daughters of the many Agudah families in our neighbourhood.

The English Agudah was still anti-Zionist and very narrow-minded. Youth activities were non-existent; secular education, as opposed to Jewish education, was a necessary evil; university was taboo. In this restrictive atmosphere all we were permitted to do by the parents of our charges was to impart religious instruction, but we slipped in some modern Hebrew songs. On sunny Sundays we went on hikes with them in the beautiful surroundings -- to Miller's Dale and Monsal Dale, to Buxton, Knutsford and Marple. My group consisted of a dozen eleven and twelve-year-olds. They were pleasant girls, but I felt uncomfortable in my role of youth leader since I was not in agreement with the narrow, anti-Zionist and outdated Weltanschauung of the English Agudah. Then too, I would gladly have stayed at home and used my free time for my favourite occupation. Whole new worlds became mine as I swallowed the historical biographies of Emil Ludwig and André Maurois, the novels of Stephan Zweig, Vera Brittain, Somerset Maugham, Arnold Bennett, Pearl Buck and Thomas Mann, all of which I had borrowed from the public library. I treated myself to special favourites such as Charles Read's "The Cloister and the Hearth," Olive Schreiner's "The Story of an African Farm," and Nora Waln's "The House of Exile." To purchase a book, especially a hard cover edition, gave me the kind of uplift many women derive from buying a new outfit or at least a new hat.

Soon after I arrived home from the factory, at around seven o'clock, we sat down to dinner. On Sundays and Mondays there was the remainder of the Friday evening meat soup, progressively watered down to make it go round. It was followed by a generous portion of vegetables, then by a slice of the Sabbath roast with boiled potatoes and gravy, once a week there was excellent boiled or fried fish; Thursdays it was often sausages, that tasted like a smoked, mushy bread and sawdust mixture. I much preferred Mama's minced meat-loaf even if it did contain a goodly percentage of soaked bread; best of all were the rissoles which

Mama made from tinned salmon. Every one of us ate every single cooked meal at home since there were no strictly kosher canteens, restaurants or school meals. Quite apart from the exorbitant prices charged, it was strictly against our principles to buy on the Black Market - and we never did. Occasionally, I spent part of my lunch break queuing for potatoes or lemons in a small greengrocer shop near the factory which sold to all comers, not merely to regular customers. Fruit and vegetables were not rationed, but were often hard to find or shops limited each customer to a small quantity, which did not go far in our large family.

After dinner I washed the dishes -- which on my insistence Beni had to dry -- except on the evenings when I ironed the family wash and then mother washed up. The white shirts worn by father and the three boys and Gitta's school blouses took up most of the time until I took to ironing merely those parts that showed under the jacket. We had no electric iron until I bought one for Mama as a coming-home present from a week's stay in Epsom with my former Ezra youth leader from Hamburg and her husband. I felt egotistical to buy her a present which only I used, but working with the flat irons, which involved constant trips from the kitchen table on which I ironed to the gas-stove in the scullery to pick up a hot iron and replace the cool one on the gas, was the part of ironing which I actively disliked. The electric iron saved me the running back and forth, and since it had a wooden handle I no longer needed pot-holders. When I was through with my chores and had no stockings of mine to mend, I pulled a chair as close to the kitchen range as I could, my nose inside a book, until father's stern voice recalled me to harsh reality.

"You fat, lazy girl, how can you sit there at your ease when your mother is slaving away in the scullery? Get up at once and help her."

I deeply resented this unfair criticism. I was neither fat nor lazy. Moreover, I had made a real effort to get through my household chores as quickly as possible in order to get



in a precious "read" before retiring to the icy-cold bedroom and early next morning creep out of bed for another hateful day at the factory. Mama took her time over the washing up: every single plate, spoon, knife and fork, saucepan and lid was first rinsed in cold tap water, then washed in a metal bowl filled with hot soap suds and once more rinsed, this time with hot water from a kettle. Pots and pans were polished with steel wool. What if I did sit down at my ease? Mama got up long after I had already left the house, and apart from the Wash-House on a Monday she wasn't all that busy. Father made up the large weekly order and took it to our out-of-the-way Jewish grocery store. He sliced and buttered the bread for breakfast and for our sandwiches and often helped Mama peel the inevitable potatoes for our evening meal. On Thursday evenings he sat stooped over a large bowl of dried white beans which went into our Sabbath lunch soup, separating the wormy beans which are ritually unclean. Of late there was even a charwoman once a week -- dear Mrs. Jones, who always felt "champion" and who never took off her hat, not even when blacking the kitchen grate.

But there was nothing for it, unfair though it was, I had to put away my book and help mother. I think that much of my impatience, even dislike of her at that time resulted from resentment. It was unfair of me, I ought to have been disenchanted with father for his conduct towards me. Being very touchy, Mama was frequently offended, most of our uncivil remarks being greeted with: "I shall always remember this, I won't ever forget it" -- luckily she did forget and pretty fast at that; or she would sigh deeply and utter with a graveyard voice: "This is a nail in my coffin," until the day when one of my brothers remarked: "Yours will be a nail-studded coffin all right and the undertakers won't be able to carry it down the stairs." Every now and then Mama threatened to return birthday presents or other gifts we had given her on the occasion of the last Jewish festival, but she never carried out her threat. I felt awful about my negative attitude towards Mama -- of course I loved her since she was my

mother, but I despised her for acting the long-suffering and ineffectual victim. "How could you marry such a woman?" I once asked father. Instead of giving me a well-deserved telling-off, he merely smirked. I was relieved, yet his reaction left me curiously dissatisfied with him. As her husband he ought to have stood up for her, but had he done so, I would have been equally displeased. I was never going to marry for if I, an otherwise nice and decent girl, could behave so abominably to my kind and intelligent mother, what could I expect from any future children of mine?

One Sunday afternoon my parents were angry with the lot of us. "You have to go a long way," Mama complained, "until you find another five such rotten children." I'd had enough. I badly needed a change of scenery, so off I went to my friends Edith and Ruth in Norton Street. Ruth opened the front door and I followed her into the living-room. Their mother, her face the colour of beetroot, sat at the table, surrounded by her four daughters, and what did I hear her say? "You have to go a long way until you find another four such rotten children." "Only as far as 1, Wellington Street West," I burst out. Five pairs of deeply shocked eyes were fixed on me, until I explained, and we grew almost hysterical with merriment. Henceforth, this expression along with "a nail in my coffin," had to be scrapped for they had become ridiculous and hence lost their efficacy.

Supreme authority is vested in our parents. "Honour thy father and thy mother," we are told in the Ten Commandments. As we thank God for His mercy to us, so we owe our parents obedience, love, respect and infinite gratitude for having bestowed upon us the most precious gift of all -- life itself -- and for having cared for us and looked after us ever since. I knew that I sinned grievously against God and them when I acted against their wishes, gave cheeky answers, when rebellion stirred within me and when I merely harboured uncharitable thoughts. I carried a constant burden of guilt around with me. I felt that their disapproval of

me was justified -- according to their lights. Even in my worst moments I never considered myself really bad, I just thought differently on some matters and dared to be critical where criticism was synonymous with disloyalty.

"Why are you crying, Betty?" Daddy asked when he came into Gitta and my room to make sure I was awake.

"Because it's Monday morning." He looked at me sadly and left the room. So my life was dull and unpleasant, and I was getting on -- nineteen already.



## Chapter 14

Edith, Ruth and a few more of us refugees were attending evening classes which prepared ~~us~~ for the teaching diploma awarded by Jews' College in London. It was divided into three stages: Certificate, Intermediate and Finals. One could sit for Part One or Part Two of each stage or for both simultaneously. The examination papers were sent to London to be marked. I did not really intend to become a teacher of Jewish subjects, but any kind of qualification is useful and three hours of study three nights a week should prevent my brain from atrophying altogether. Like the others, I decided to prepare for the Intermediate and I would sit for both parts, though I was joining the course in the middle. I was certain that with my excellent background in Jewish knowledge that should not prove a serious handicap. Our teacher was a pleasant, middle-aged refugee, the former principal of a Jewish Teachers' Seminary in Germany. In private we made fun of his strong south-German pronunciation of English and Hebrew, but we respected his knowledge and teaching ability. I finished work at six and since the classes began at seven, I went to them straight from the factory. My parents thoroughly approved of my new venture though Mama was not too happy that on three evenings a week I ate my first and only cooked meal at 10.30 p.m.

When the time came, I sat for both parts of the Intermediate, and when the results were published, I was stunned: I had failed in two subjects, one in Part 1 and one in Part 2. I felt deeply humiliated and was sure that everyone despised me. I chided myself: Pride goeth before a fall, and serves you right to be taken down a peg. For weeks I wallowed in misery. My friends were kindness itself, without a trace of condescension. Finally, I took myself in hand and decided to start preparing for Part 1, which I passed in March 1944, the next time the examination was held. One of the subjects had been a tractate of the Mishnah, which is

the codification of the Oral Law. This work was not usually studied by women. Though I had not requested it, Daddy offered his help, but with an immediate rider:

"Do not expect me to help you when it comes to the Talmud."

This is the name of two great compilations which contain the records of academic discussions of the judicial administration of Jewish Law.

"Why won't you help me with the Talmud?" I asked Daddy, though I had a shrewd idea of the reason for his refusal.

"Because the Talmud contains material which it is not proper for a father to study with his daughter."

He was referring to the parts that deal with the menstrual cycle and with other laws concerning women's physical purity.

"I'm pretty sure we won't be asked to study those particular subjects, besides, Talmud is only required for the Finals, not the Intermediate."

Daddy shook his head. "No, when it comes to the Talmud, I'm afraid you'll have to do without my help."

Of course, the real reason was that the Talmud is purely men's preserve, women being weak vessels, illogical and emotional, they are quite unsuited to study this difficult work and follow its frequently involved arguments and legal hair-splitting. Still, better play safe and not let any female anywhere near this work, not even my daughter Betty -- I followed Daddy's silent argument -- I'm a modern man in that I'm not discouraging her from studying the Mishnah, but hands off the Talmud -- she and others like her might even succeed in its study and where would that leave us men?

Now that I had proved to myself that I was not a complete dunce, I decided not to continue to Part Two, especially since my teaching experience had not been of the happiest.

I had been asked to teach on Sunday mornings at the Hebrew classes of the prestigious Crumpsall Synagogue. On my first Sunday, in addition to my own class, I was given the top class normally taught by the Principal who happened to be absent that Sunday, plus a third class whose teacher was ill. Some sixty ten to thirteen-year-old boys and girls were crowded into benches meant for twenty. They had a glorious time pushing one another off the benches, a few particularly adventurous souls started prancing round the classroom. I had my work cut out to maintain some slight semblance of discipline and to keep those sixty brats quiet so that my inability to cope might not penetrate to the classrooms adjoining mine. Three hours of this unequal struggle left me a complete wreck, I felt ineffectual, humiliated and a failure. The other teachers had done me the dirty -- I never found out their reason. Though the following Sunday I only had my own class to teach, I found it difficult to establish my impaired authority and felt rather like a nervous lion tamer. To my surprise, the Principal asked me to come and teach also on weekday afternoons after the children had finished lessons at their non-Jewish schools. This meant that I would have had to leave the factory an hour early; the Principal, the well known and respected Rabbi Rosen, asked permission for me to leave early. Permission was refused, one of the Baker brothers explained to me that though they would have like to oblige the Rabbi, no exception could be made. I was not altogether sorry as I was not at all sure that I really wanted to teach those unruly children more than once a week. However, the Principal's good opinion of me did my deflated ego a world of good, and it must have made the Bakers realize that I was cut out for something better than being a machinist in their factory.

I missed Edith's company during the lunch break and on the way home. She had attained her release from the factory on the strength of a doctor's certificate which attested to her mother's high blood pressure necessitating Edith's help at home. My mother too found



it increasingly difficult to manage our large household. She was suffering badly from arthritis in her back and hands. She had grown very round shouldered and her once straight, slim fingers were bent and gnarled. Our doctor issued the necessary certificate. An old, dear friend of the family, Miss Annie Q. Henriques, though well over eighty, insisted on coming with me to the tribunal that was to decide on the application for my release from the factory. I explained to the members of the board that immersing her hands in cold water -- we had no running hot water -- was extremely painful and worsened mother's arthritis. That though she worked from morning till late at night she just could not get through all the work which our large household demanded. The men and women listened politely. Then it was Miss Henriques' turn:

"Mrs. Emanuel was not born to scrub floors and peel potatoes," she explained. "From the day she married her husband supplied her with a living-in maid and a washer woman. She lived the life of a lady. She is a brave little woman who tries to do her best, but she is a hopeless housewife; why, she does not even know how to peel a potato -- as I've had the opportunity to witness with my own eyes."

I squirmed in my seat -- thinking of the hundredweights of potatoes Mama had peeled in her lifetime. Worse still, Miss Henriques' exaggerated claims had made a bad impression on the members of the board as I saw from the expressions on their faces. Miss Henriques had meant well, but she had badly overstated the case. The verdict was predictable:

"It is the opinion of this board that Mrs. Emanuel's inability to peel potatoes is hardly a valid reason to release her daughter from war work!"

I asked for permission to speak: "My present 'war' work consists of sewing up little girls' bonnets; as you will agree that can hardly be classed as work of major importance for

the war effort." But it was useless, the board was not prepared to reconsider its decision and I could not really blame it.

It was the summer of 1944. My annual week of freedom from the factory was just around the corner. Most factories, or works as they were called, shut down simultaneously for the Bank Holiday week which began on the first Sunday in August. The London based Ezra religious youth movement was organizing a fortnight's harvesting camp in Chieveley, a village in Berkshire. Jacob and I decided to go to the camp. We had to pay our own train fare, but the camp itself was free, in fact, the farmers would pay each one of us twopence an hour for our work. It was a ten-hour journey with several changes and long periods of waiting for crowded trains.

Two tent encampments had been put up at opposite ends of a long meadow -- one for the boys and the other for us girls. We slept three or four to a tent on palliasses -- most romantic except for the day and night when it poured non-stop. Our first morning dawned blue and golden. After morning prayer and breakfast we were divided into groups of eight or ten boys and girls. My group was sent to pull out a certain weed by the roots in a huge meadow. The farmer impressed on us that since the weed was poisonous to cows and the meadow was intended for pasture, we must make quite sure that not a single one remained in the ground. By eleven o'clock, after a few hours of hard work, we were through. We tried to find the farmer to direct us to our next job, but he was nowhere to be seen. At first we just stood about, after a while we sat down and finally stretched out full length on the soft, warm grass. The sun made bright red patterns behind my closed eyelids. Suddenly there was a mighty roar and the sun was blotted out by a huge flock of black birds. There were hundreds of aeroplanes and nowhere to hide -- we made a perfect target of ten sitting ducks. However,

the planes took no notice of us -- they were ours and heading south towards the Channel. It was not long after the Allied landing on the beaches of Normandy.

Close to lunch-time our farmer reappeared: "What! Finished already? You can't have pulled up all that lot in such a short time." He shook his head in disbelief, but was not able to find a single poisonous weed. "That there field was to have lasted you all day, you'll just have to take the afternoon off."

We were flabbergasted. Here we'd come in a fine fit of patriotic fervour in answer to the government's appeal to help the short-handed farmers bring in the harvest, and our man couldn't find us anything to do. When he knew us better the farmer confided that he was not used to the speed with which we foreigners got through our work. The following morning we were sent to stack sheaves of corn. We soon found that stacking or stooking was an art. It looked easy enough when the land-army girl, who was delegated to instruct us, grabbed a sheaf, embraced it and set it down firmly on the stubbly ground, she took hold of another one and rested it against the first one; it took eight sheaves to make up a stook. Two people worked together. My companion and I did our best, but our sheaves, like spirited horses, must have felt that we were novices, they simply refused to stand still. It took several attempts until we managed to keep our sheaves from collapsing, though even then they looked nothing as proud and upright as those of the land-girl. With a sigh of relief we moved on to start on another stook and yet another. A pleasant breeze had sprung up. At the end of the row we looked back proudly at our achievement. That was a mistake. First one and then another, like a house of cards, the sheaves fell over sideways and slipped to the ground, too weak to stand up. They had my sympathy, I felt like joining them. We were tired and sweaty, our bare arms and legs criss-crossed with red scratches, but we weren't going to permit those sheaves to defeat us. One by one we picked them up and with a heavy thud stood them up once more,



balancing one sheaf against the other. They remained standing, but only just; hopefully, the fresh breeze would not develop into a gale. On the journey to Chieveley I had passed many fields with stooks standing proudly to attention in long straight rows, while ours resembled nothing so much as groups of slightly tipsy giants, none too steady on their legs, feet wide apart, heads bent close together as they exchanged the latest piece of juicy scandal.

Supper was followed by a Shiur, given by one of the youth leaders or by the Rabbi who was the spiritual head of the camp. The Shiur usually consisted of explanations to the portion from the Pentateuch or Prophets to be read in synagogue the following Sabbath. This evening, after the day's struggle with the obstinate sheaves, my mind was a blank and my eyes refused to remain open. The following day we fed straw into one end of a machine which it spewed out as large bales at the other end. My job was to stick metal strips into an aperture which the machine tied round the bales. It was easy work, but left my hands stained with oily rust which it took days of rubbing with pumice stone to clean. Some of our boys loaded the bales sky-high on to a farm cart which two huge shire horses then pulled to the barn. I was invited for a ride on top of the bales -- it sounded a most romantic offer, but as I could see no way of getting up on top, and once up, no way of getting down, I regretfully declined.

Our village idyll was rudely shattered by an outbreak of dysentery; we blamed the kitchen staff, until we heard that an epidemic had broken out in the village and that the water supply was suspected to be its cause. On Friday I succumbed with all the classic symptoms of an acute attack. All patients were moved from the tents in the meadow to camp beds in the near-by empty village school. The Rabbi and his wife took an active part in nursing us back to health, and by Monday morning I felt well enough to travel home and so would miss only one day's work at the factory. Jacob, who had longer holidays, stayed on for the second

week. In Birmingham I had to change not only trains, but stations, My suitcase weighed a ton; in addition to my clothes it also contained my sheets and blankets, plates and cutlery. The distance between the stations must be many miles, or so it seemed to me. Out of nowhere, an elegantly dressed man suddenly appeared in front of me and offered to carry my case. He explained that he worked "up there," pointing to a tall office building, "I couldn't see you drag along that heavy case." My knight in shining armour carried my case to the station and all the way up to the platform for the Manchester train. On the way to the station I expressed my admiration for the large, busy, yet clean centre of Birmingham through which we were walking.

"Oh no, Birmingham's an ugly, filthy town," he disagreed.

It couldn't possibly be worse than Manchester," I countered.

To run down one's home town was an odd way of making polite conversation.

The following day it was back to grim, grey Ancoats where sunny green meadows and golden stooks of corn were as unreal and as far away as the man on the moon. And before I knew it, I had once more grown used to the sooty coal smell of the Manchester air, in fact, I no longer noticed it.

Not long after my return to Manchester I had a wonderful surprise. One Sunday, when I returned home from teaching at the synagogue classes, Mama told me with a mysterious, smiling face: "Go into the dining-room, there's someone waiting for you." It was Vera, my former school friend from Hamburg -- mutual acquaintances in Manchester had given her our address. She had left Hamburg with her then nine-year-old sister Ellen -- of our Purim joke -- on a children's transport shortly before the beginning of the war. We felt a certain shyness and constraint as we stared at one another, trying to discover in the adult the child we had known five years ago. And there it lurked behind Vera's grown-up hair style, the lipstick and

powder -- I wore no make-up. We used to be the same height, however, Vera had grown while I had remained 5ft. 4½ inches. Through mixing almost exclusively in English circles she was already much less continental and foreign in her speech, facial expression and movements. But how lucky I was to enjoy the warmth and security of life within my own family, something Vera had not known since she parted from her parents. She'd heard nothing from them for years. Soon we were gabbling away, trying to telescope the events of all those years into the few hours at our disposal.

"I started out learning dressmaking in Grimsby," she told me, "a profession for which one doesn't need language, important, as our permits to stay in England were valid only till our eighteenth birthday. In 1941 I moved to Cambridge and took a six months' domestic science course held in a house taken over from Ayre, the philosopher. Britain was short of maids and I was the only one who got out of being a 'domestic.' I returned to dressmaking till I was called up for war work."

We promised ourselves that Vera would come and spend her next holiday with us.

We had some more out-of-town visitors that summer. Aund Hadassah and Uncle Ludwig were looking forward to one week's much needed rest from the V-2s, the unmanned rockets, which were then devastating London. One was safe so long as one heard the whine of the rocket overhead, it was when the engine cut out that it dropped from the sky. A popular, but dangerous game among little London boys was to race the V-2s and watch them fall. Manchester had so far been spared this particular menace -- that is, until the first night of Aunt Hadassah and Uncle Ludwig's visit, when a stray one zoomed over our house.

Aunt Hadassah was a beautiful woman, tall and stately, with jet-black, wavy hair, dark eyes glowing with the joy of living, her voice was husky and full of laughter even when she merely spoke. With Uncle Ludwig one felt cosy and protected, his whole being bespoke



kindness and understanding. One simply could not help being fond of them. They were fully accepted by my parents even though religious observances sat lightly on them. Years later they told me how much they had appreciated my parents' tolerance. Their visit had coincided with the Fast of the Ninth of Av. Knowing that they did not observe the fast, Mama offered them a meal when we children were out of the way. When I told her how much they had appreciated this evidence of her and Daddy's broad-mindedness, she was highly amused: "We offered them a meal because if we had not, they'd have gone to a restaurant in town and eaten a non-kosher meal, we preferred it to be a kosher one at least."

It was on this visit that we learnt of the active part Aunt Hadassah had taken in securing an entrance permit to this country for us five children. It was a sobering thought to realize on how thin a thread our lives had hung in the balance. Did one's fate depend then on the personal whim or inspiration of a human being? Of course not. God must have worked through the agency of Aunt Hadassah, I decided. We had been taught to believe that every one of us has his own guardian angel and also that one's fate was determined annually. According to one's performance during the past year and one's present state of sincere repentance one was inscribed in the Book of Life on New Year and the verdict was sealed ten days later on the Day of Atonement.

In addition to one's own merits there was the store of merits accumulated by our ancestors, a belief based on the second of the Ten Commandments: ". . . for I the Lord am a zealous God . . . showing loving kindness to the thousandth generation, unto them that love me and keep my commandments." Our Emanuel grandparents had brought up a fatherless nephew -- Uncle Markus -- and our own parents had done the same for our orphaned cousin Fanny. The Bible repeatedly stresses the injunction to assist widows and orphans, so maybe we were consuming some of the results of their meritorious acts -- but then, why hadn't it

worked with father's sister Aunt Rahel and her husband, whose permit to enter Britain had reached them a few days before Chamberlain declared war on Germany and who hadn't made it? They had brought up Fanny's youngest sister Elisabeth who had been only two years old when her parents died. Elisabeth had been overtaken by the Germans in Holland. Then there were father's eldest brother, Uncle Jacob with his wife and youngest daughter who had not managed to escape either. And what about Uncle Markus and Aunt Marthe and their eight children who had brought up another one of Fanny's sisters and who had helped us and two other families to escape the Nazis and make a new life in England? They too were trapped in Holland. Of course, it was preferable to work off one's punishment on this earth rather than after death in the hereafter, but all these relatives had been God-fearing, kind and good people. After death one's soul ascends to God where our actions throughout our earthly life are weighed, and woe betide if the evil deeds tip the scale. Mind you, our more rational kind of Judaism does not believe in the Christian hell of fire and brimstone, I don't really know what awaits the sinner up there, nor, for that matter, what the saint. According to tradition, a woman can earn herself a place in heaven by waiting up for her husband's late return from the Beit Midrash, the House of Study, in which case -- much to Mama's indignation -- she can look forward to occupying a footstool at her husband's feet! So much for women's equality in the heavenly kingdom:

One of the few spheres offering equality to the sexes -- in this world -- is that of higher education, that is to say, secular education, though even here, in many families boys were given priority because they will one day have to maintain a family while a girl's higher education is considered a luxury, even a waste<sup>of</sup>, of time, since once she marries she'll be "kept" by her husband.

Like some of my friends I had decided to enrol in a London Matriculation correspondence course. At last I was doing something to augment my scanty and truncated formal education. The college was situated in Cambridge and although I never set foot in that university city, it felt grand to receive letter paper headed "University Correspondence College, Burlington House, Cambridge." Fortunately, the fee of £6.17.6d could be paid in instalments. There had to be a minimum of five subjects, mine were: English and mathematics which were compulsory, Hebrew and German which I considered easy options, and history - which I liked best. Mathematics was the most difficult, however Beni never tired of explaining patiently and lucidly any problem I encountered. I spent many happy and contented hours on weekday evenings and on Sundays reading the prescribed text books and lesson papers and then answering the test papers in the special exercise books supplied by the college. Two weeks later they were returned corrected.

Students were forbidden to address any remarks to a tutor not strictly connected with the subject matter. On one occasion I stretched this rule. A history text praised England's tradition of granting asylum to and absorbing in its social and economic life foreigners who had suffered political or religious persecution in their own country. I wrote that as a refugee from Nazi oppression I was grateful indeed to Britain for having granted me asylum, but that from my own experience I knew that this offer depended on a guarantee that the refugee would not become a financial liability to Britain, and as for the economic absorption of refugees, they were granted a work permit only for those jobs for which no British national could be found; thus I had "enjoyed" the choice of working as a domestic servant or in a



factory. The tutor's answer consisted of one brief sentence: "You had a third choice: to work in a hospital." True. He had obviously done his homework.

I did my homework on the dining table in the kitchen where all activities were concentrated, especially in winter because the coal ration was just sufficient to heat one room. After our evening meal and when there was no ironing to be done on the table, Daddy settled down in his desk chair -- on which none of dared sit, apart from the cat -- with the News Chronicle crossword puzzle. Mummy sat next to him, a pile of mending at her side. On the evenings when Beni had no classes at the Manchester Technical College and no Talmud lesson to attend, he too sat at the table preparing his work for college; Jacob, Gitta and Raphael did their school homework or read, and I prepared my test papers for Burlington House. There wasn't a sound to be heard except for a cinder dropping in the kitchen grate or an occasional happy grunt from father when an ingenious clue had yielded its elusive solution. Late one evening this deep silence was shattered by a shrill and prolonged ringing of the door bell. Two policemen stood at the door. One of them we had met before. What could they want from us? And at such a late hour? Maybe our black-out curtain showed a chink of light? No, they didn't want anything at all. The policeman we knew pointed at the seven of us sitting round the table. "So you wouldn't believe me when I told you how they spend their evenings," he seemed inordinately proud of us -- as of a prize-winning, rare exhibit. "Sorry for the disturbance." They turned on their heels and marched out.

We had first met "our" policeman a few summers ago when he had come in answer to our complaint that neighbourhood boys, generally from the back street -- the "lane" as it was called -- opposite our house, were in the habit of entering our garden, pulling up the radishes and flowers that Jacob had planted and throwing pebbles and stones through the open kitchen window. Of course, by the time the policeman arrived on the scene the culprits were

nowhere to be seen. The policeman gave my parents an astonishing piece of advice: "You've got three boys, instead of calling us, why don't they give those lads a good hiding? That'll stop the trouble soon enough." Amazingly, it was Gitta who put his advice into practice. Little boys considered the large window of our downstairs bed-room the perfect "wall" for their ball games. To have the broken pane replaced was a big expense. One fine day Gitta caught a boy in the act -- and without further ado she got hold of him and smacked his face. It was the day she had lost her new school blazer and as a result she was not her usual fastidious and somewhat timid self -- "otherwise I would never have dreamt of touching a strange boy," she explained. It was not long before an irate father turned up with a retinue of female relatives and threatened Gitta:

"You raise yer bloody 'and to me boy once more an' Ah'll smash in yer bleeding 'ead, and 'Ah'll call t'police an' 'ave yer up for 'ssault."

Mama came to Gitta's aid: "Go on, complain to the police, you won't get much change out of them, we only followed police orders when my daughter smacked your son -- and he richly deserved it. And it wouldn't be necessary if you'd brought him up properly. You see to it that he and his friends don't throw their ball at our window. If it breaks then it's you, the parents, who'll have to pay for the damage."

Off they went, without another word -- and the gaping holes in the man's socks were visible half-way up the street. I suppose that being foreign -- Germans as well as Jews -- made us a natural target, but we weren't willing to play the role of passive victims to a lot of snot-nosed youngsters and their loutish parents. Now, after some four years in their midst, we were on friendly terms with our immediate neighbours and on a "good morning, nice-day-today" footing with most of the others.

Mrs. Glickman, opposite us at No. 2, had come to Britain from Rumania as a small girl. She shared her home with her old parents, there was no Mr. Glickman in evidence. They formed a close threesome. A particularly fine summer day would tempt the old couple to sit for an hour or two on their wooden kitchen chairs by the iron gate of the tiny front garden; he was invariably dressed in a black suit, a black skull-cap on his snow-white hair, she was enveloped in a large black shawl even on the warmest day. They answered the greetings of passers-by with a smile as bright as their shining brass Sabbath candlesticks, the large, round brass and copper platters on the wall above the fireplace in the living-kitchen and the gleaming fire-irons and coal skuttle.

Mrs. Glickman used to work as a finisher at H. Marks -- we often walked home together arm in arm in the black-out, until after prolonged pressure from her comfortably situated sister and brother-in-law she agreed to give up her financial independence and accept an allowance from them. Henceforth, she devoted herself completely to the care of her aged parents. Mrs. Glickman had suffered a raw deal from life -- or maybe from Jewish law. She was a pretty woman even in middle age, sweet natured and helpful. She must have been beautiful as a young bride. Six months after the wedding her husband was hospitalized in a lunatic asylum -- for the rest of his life. It turned out that he had been institutionalized also before the wedding, but this fact had been kept secret from his future wife and her family. According to Jewish law only a man can instigate a divorce and he must be in his right mind when he agrees to divorce. Mr. Glickman was not and thus she remained tied to him until he died, by which time she herself was an elderly woman.



Things were going very badly for the Germans, but still the war went on. The German people dared not imagine defeat. Since Hitler's rise to power twelve years ago, they had been indoctrinated: They were the world's Aryan Herrenvolk, the Germanic, invincible super race; this the Third Reich would last a thousand years. And they were fired with the zeal of wiping out the national shame of Germany's -- naturally, completely undeserved -- defeat in the Great War of 1914-1918. There had been the humiliating surrender and the cruel and unfair war reparations demanded of them. There were those -- on both sides -- who considered that this had sown the seeds for the next war. Another defeat was simply unthinkable and any thought of surrender, even in the face of all odds, was tantamount to a betrayal of their beloved Führer and of the German Fatherland. But Adolf Hitler did not seem to care if he engulfed his people in an apocalypse.

A number of high military officers who saw the writing on the wall, planned a putsch to topple Hitler and his seemingly blind advisers in order to stop further completely useless destruction and bloodshed, and to try and prevent an unconditional surrender to the victorious Allies. But their plan came to light and they were killed.

So the war went on and on, and the longer it lasted the slither the chances our dear ones stood of surviving their hell on earth. A number of inmates from the Bergen Belsen concentration camp had reached Palestine on a prisoner exchange and a group from that camp and from the concentration camp at Theresienstadt -- or Terezin as it's called in Czech -- had been allowed to enter neutral Switzerland. Therefore, no one could any longer claim ignorance of what was going on inside these death camps and how close the Germans were to realizing their aim of "annihilating the Jewish race in Europe in the eventuality of war" as Hitler had promised in 1939. We prayed for Oma, for our uncles and aunts, our cousins, friends, classmates -- the list was long. Secretly I, and probably also the others, wondered whether we

were praying for living people; however, we did not voice our fears, it would not help anyone, just make us feel even more gloomy.

And then -- on the eighth of May 1945 -- the victory bells rang out! Too excited to remain indoors I walked along the streets of Salford, swallowing big gulps of intoxicating air and looking up at a now safe, light blue sky. The forces of darkness had been vanquished by the forces of light. And now that the European war was ended, it could not be long until Japan too was defeated. No more fathers, brothers, sons and sweethearts maimed and killed. No more deadly bombs dropping from the sky. The seas no longer a mined death trap. After these nightmarish six years there never would, nay, ever could, be another war. Peace on earth for evermore. The whole world was wide open, it was mind-boggling.

I stopped short in my tracks: Why, victory also brought me my own personal freedom. My long years inside factory walls were surely at an end. I would not, after all, be a factory girl for ever. All options seemed feasible. And so I turned round and made for home.







